BACKSTAGE FABRICATIONS

WHERE ARTISTRY MEETS EXECUTION

THE ART OF PLANNING:
SET DESIGN PROCESS PRESENTATION

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Backstage Fabrications Design Process

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Planning for Success

◈ **Begin with Purpose:** Collaborate early with the client or director to define a clear Scope of Work that aligns creative ambition with practical reality.

◈ **Proactively Manage Expectations:** Address concerns, constraints, and assumptions upfront—this prevents misalignment and builds trust.

◈ **Identify Needs from Wants:** Clarify essential design elements versus aspirational ones to avoid delays and focus resources where they matter most.

◈ **Design with Milestones in Mind:** Break the process into measurable checkpoints to track progress, adapt strategy, and maintain momentum.

◈ **Let Research Guide the Vision:** Ground your aesthetic choices in contextual, historical, or conceptual research that elevates the storytelling.

◈ **Respect the Paperwork:** Treat pre-production documents, cue sheets, and technical packets as design tools, not just logistics. Precision here is protection later.

◈ **Be Structured, Yet Adaptable:** Build a strong workflow, but leave room for discovery. Great design evolves with the needs of the production.

◈ **Balance Artistry with Technical Fluency:** Design thrives at the intersection of art and engineering. Learn when to let imagination run wild and when logic must take over.

◈ **Lead by Equipping Others:** Empower your crew with clarity, context, and collaboration. A strong team is a reflection of preparation.

◈ **Pause. Reflect. Recalibrate.:** Regularly step back to evaluate whether your design still serves the story, the moment, and the production as a whole.

Questions for the Director

1) What is the Essential Beauty of the production? *Vision | Statement | Objective | Message | Goal*

2) Realism vs Artistic? On a scale of 5, where is the production?   Realism 5_____0_____5 Artistic

3) What is the color palette or scheme of the production?

4) What Era, Period, or Time does the production take place?

5) What is the style or genre of the production?

6) Minimalism vs Detailed? On a scale of 10, how detailed is the production?   Minimalism 0_____ 10 Detailed

7) Are the locations suggestive or actual? What are the primary actuals if it is a blend?

8) Hard Requirements: i.e. Pathways(Entrance/Exits), Levels, Functions, Stage Combat, Dance, and etc...

9) Any desired practical and interactive elements?

10) Special Effects: Traps, Haze, Fog, Blacklight, Strobe, and etc...

11) Any other critical influences or inspirations that may not be indicated on the director's vision board?

7 Elements of Design

❖ **Line:** Line refers to the way that two points in space are connected. Whether they're horizontal lines, diagonal lines, or vertical lines, lines can help direct the eye toward a certain point in your composition. You can also create texture by incorporating different types of lines such as curved or patterned lines instead of just straight lines.

❖ **Shape:** In its most basic form, a shape is a two-dimensional area that is surrounded by an outline. Graphic artists can use other elements including line, color, value, and shadow to give a shape the appearance of a three-dimensional shape. There are three types of shapes: organic shapes which occur naturally in the world, geometric shapes which are angular and mathematically consistent, and abstract shapes that represent things in nature but aren't perfectly representative.

❖ **Color:** Color helps establish a mood for your composition. When light waves strike an object and reflect back to the optic nerve in a human's eyes, the sensation they perceive is called color. Artists and designers use color to depict and describe the subject. Color is used by designers to portray mood, light, depth, and point of view. Designers use the color wheel and the tenets of color theory—a set of guidelines for mixing, combining, and manipulating colors—to create color schemes.

❖ **Space:** Making proper use of space can help others view your design as you intended. White space or negative space is the space between or around the focal point of an image. Positive space is the space that your subject matter takes up in your composition. The spacing of your design is important because a layout that's too crowded can overwhelm the viewer's eye.

❖ **Form:** Form pertains to the way that a shape or physical configuration occupies space. Instead of creating form through three-dimensional physical shape, designers create the appearance of form on a flat surface by using light, shadow, the appearance of an object's contours, negative space, and the surrounding objects around the subject matter.

❖ **Value:** In design, value refers to the lightness or darkness of a color. The values of a color are often visualized in a gradient, which displays a series of variations on one hue, arranged from the lightest to the darkest. Artists can use the various values of color to create the illusion of mass and volume in their work.

❖ **Texture:** Texture is one of the elements of design that is used to represent how an object appears or feels. Tactile texture is a physical sense of touch, whether it's rough, smooth, or ribbed. Visual texture, on the other hand, refers to the imagined feel of the illustrated texture, which can create more visual interest and a heightened sensory experience.

7 Principles of Design

◈ **Balance:** The distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.

◈ **Proportion/Scale:** The feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.

◈ **Contrast:** The arrangement of opposite elements and effects. For example, light and dark colors, smooth and rough textures, large and small shapes. Contrast can be used to create variety, visual interest, and drama in an artwork.

◈ **Repetition/Pattern:** The repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art.

◈ **Movement/Momentum:** The path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.

◈ **Focus/Emphasis:** The part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Typically, the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.

◈ **Unity:** The feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.

Backstage Fabrications
Research & Conception

Systematic Research

Conceptual Design

Systematic Research

- ◈ **Story & Script Contextualization:** Study the play's time, themes, and rhythm to ground your design in narrative truth.

- ◈ **Genre & Style Alignment:** Identify the production's tone and theatrical style to guide visual language.

- ◈ **Period & Environment Research:** Research clothing, props, and architecture relative to the era and character class.

- ◈ **Socioeconomic Layering:** Design environments that reflect class, culture, and character lifestyle.

- ◈ **Visual Language & Conceptual Aesthetic:** Develop a cohesive look using metaphor, symbolism, and thematic visuals.

- ◈ **Character-Driven Detailing:** Let props, space, and set dressing reflect inner character lives.

- ◈ **Collaboration & Integration:** Coordinate with all departments to maintain a unified design vision.

- ◈ **Spatial Logic & Practicality:** Ensure the set supports performance, traffic flow, and transitions seamlessly.

- ◈ **Budget-Conscious Design Strategy:** Balance creative ambition with material, labor, and time constraints.

- ◈ **Safety, Stability & Polish:** Prioritize durability and safety while delivering a professional finish.

Conceptual Design

- ◈ **Define the Design Challenge:** Clarify the story's needs, tone, and thematic goals. What does the world need to say and support?

- ◈ **Contextual Research:** Dive into the script's time period, genre, cultural context, and visual world, studying everything from socioeconomics to architecture.

- ◈ **Analyze Influences & References:** Collect visual and narrative references from art, media, history, and past productions to form an informed design vocabulary.

- ◈ **Identify Conceptual Anchors:** Find your core metaphors, shapes, or emotional signatures. What symbolic or visual language will carry the story?

- ◈ **Generate and Explore Ideas:** Brainstorm diverse possibilities: realism vs. stylization, spatial logic vs. abstraction, and thematic color palettes or motifs.

- ◈ **Visualize Early Concepts:** Translate ideas into loose sketches, collages, 2D segmented paper floorplans, or 3D block-outs to explore layout, flow, and mood.

- ◈ **Develop Concept Art or Mood Boards:** Refine chosen ideas into early design drafts, diagrams, or reference boards that show scale, texture, tone, and emotional atmosphere.

- ◈ **Prototype or Draft the Environment:** Create detailed floorplans, white models, or digital renders to assess practical flow, composition, and audience sightlines.

- ◈ **Test the Concept Against Story & Function:** Evaluate your design choices by asking: Does this support the narrative? Does it enhance character, theme, and actor performance?

- ◈ **Refine & Finalize the Conceptual Package:** Based on internal feedback or team input, polish the concept into a full design presentation ready for production planning.
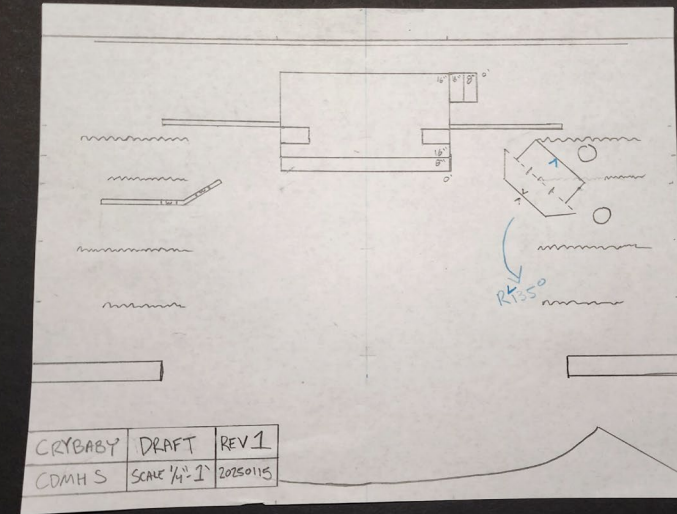
Backstage Fabrications Floor Planning

Hand Drawn Floor Planning

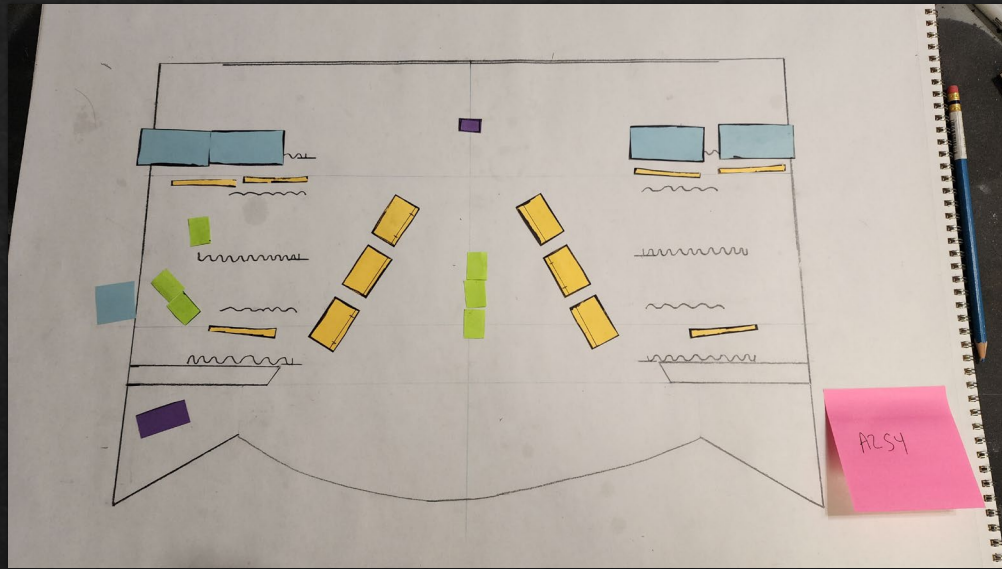Segmented Paper Floor Planning

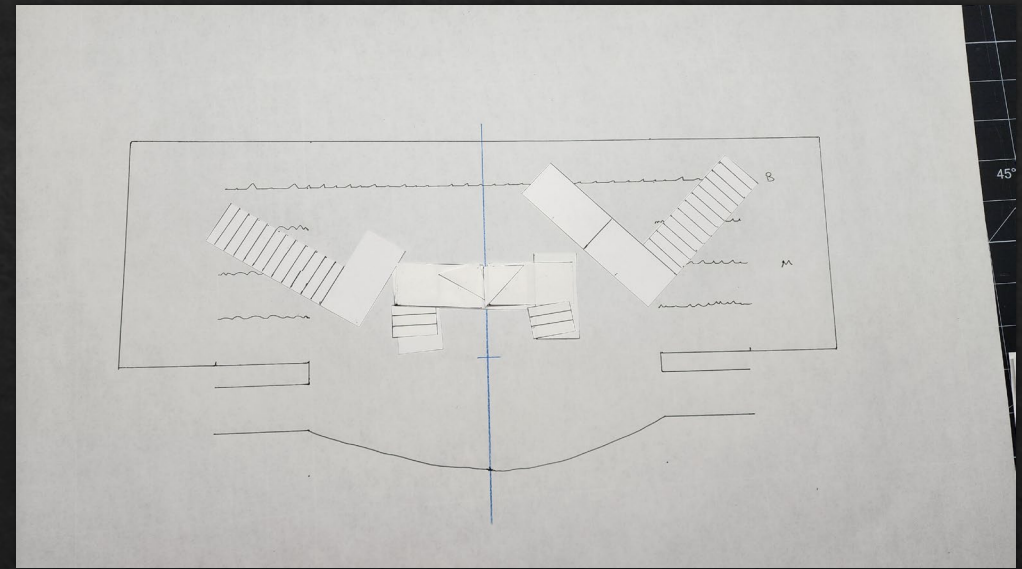Digital Floor Planning
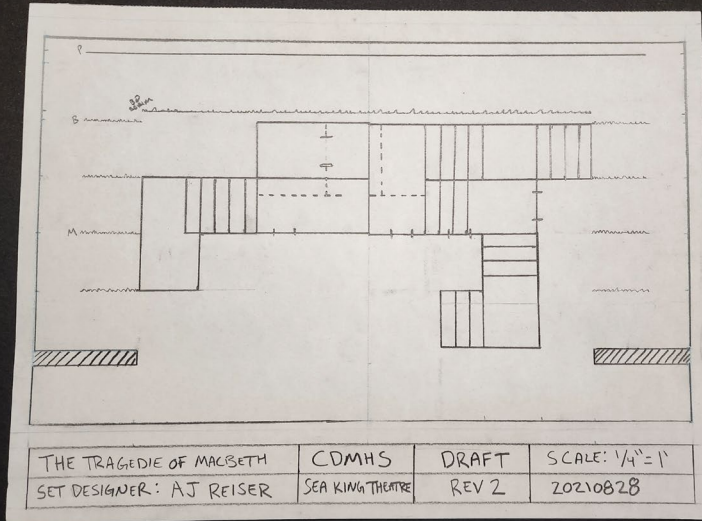
The Tragedie of Macbeth
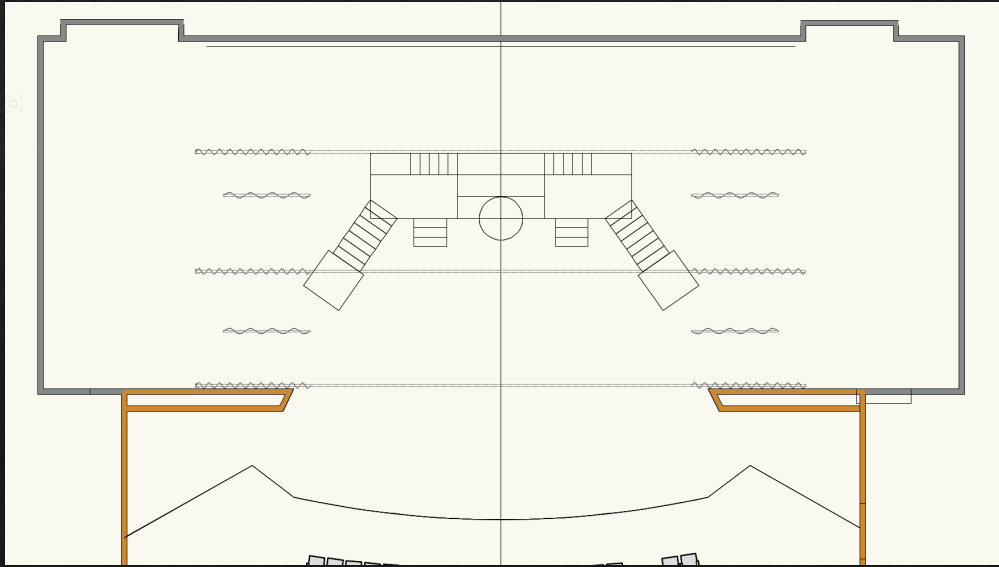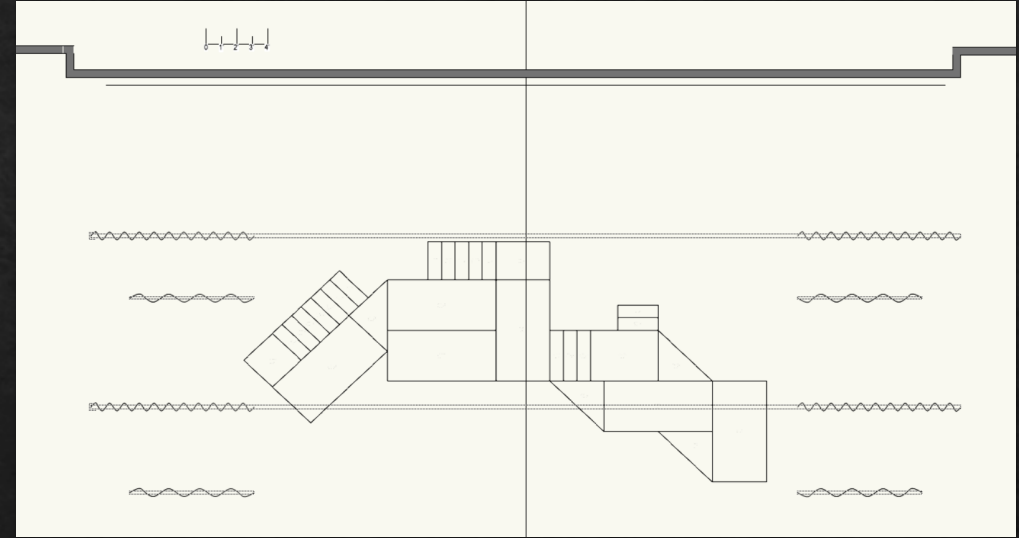
Crybaby

Hand Drawn Floor Planning

Radium Girls

Peter and The Starcatcher

Segmented Paper Floor Planning

Chicago

A Midsommer Nights Dreame
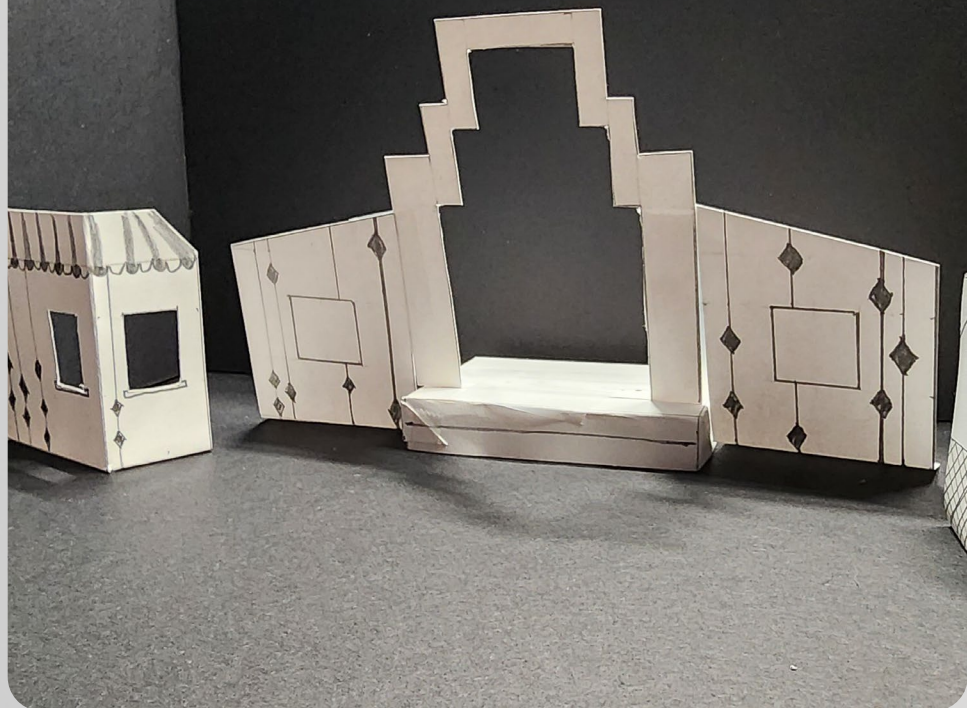
Digital Floor Planning

Backstage Fabrications Modeling

5 Levels of Modeling

Physical Modeling
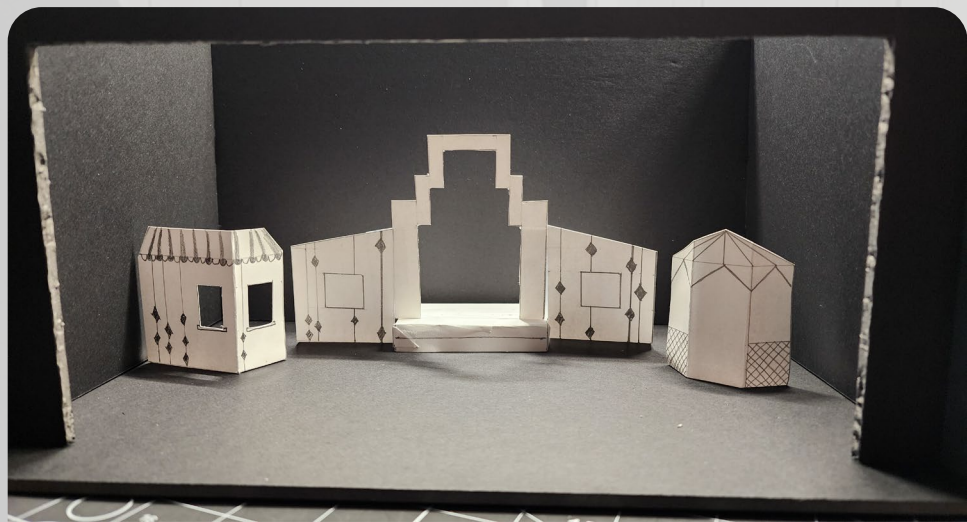
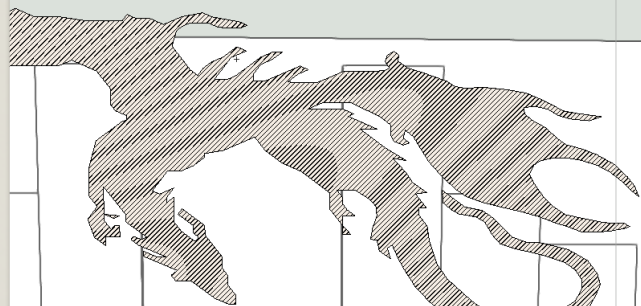Digital Modeling

Level 1 Modeling

PAPER MODELING

MEDIUM

Cardstock, Foam Core Board, & others

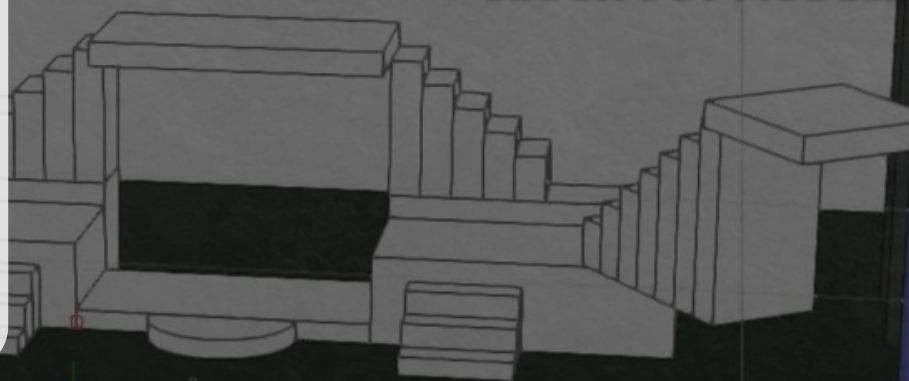**EXAMPLE**

Crybaby (2025)| Physical
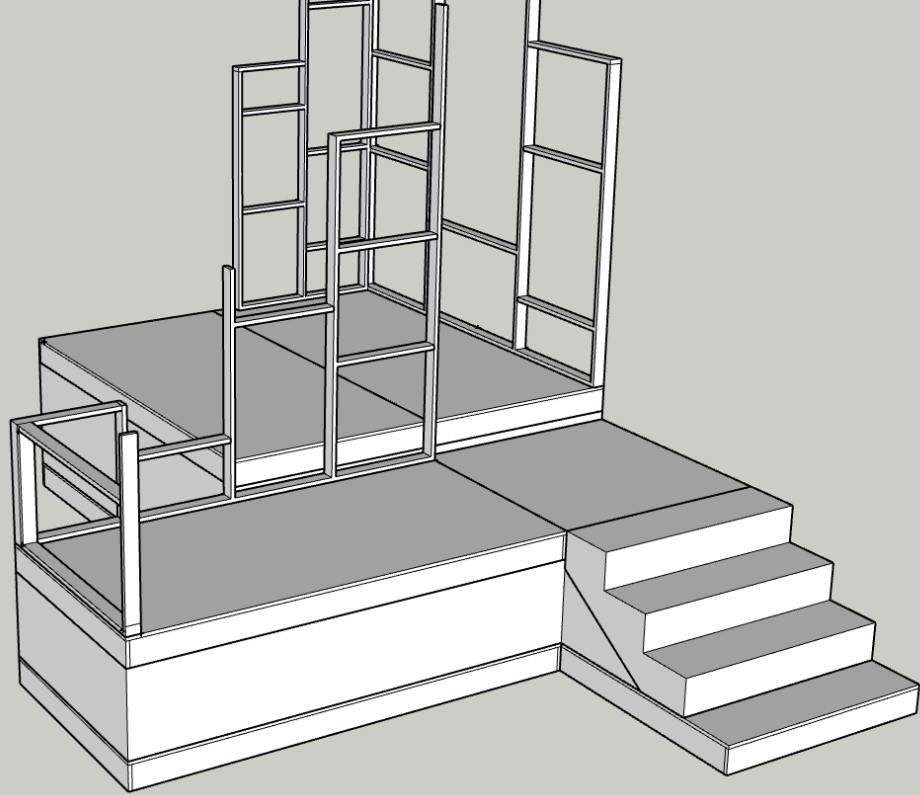
Level 2 Modeling

BLOCK-OUT MODELING
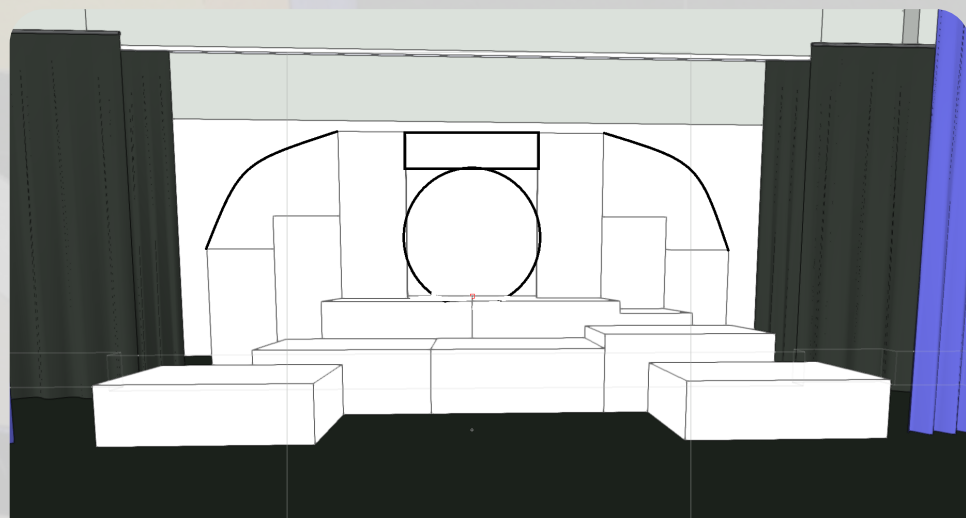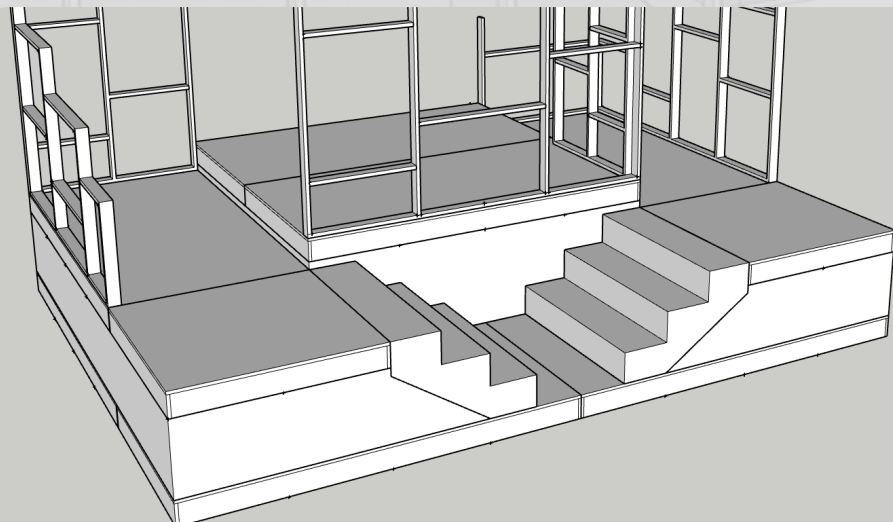
MEDIUM

VectorWorks

EXAMPLE

She Kills Monsters (2022), Chicago (2023) | Digital

Level 3 Modeling

MOCK-UP MODELING
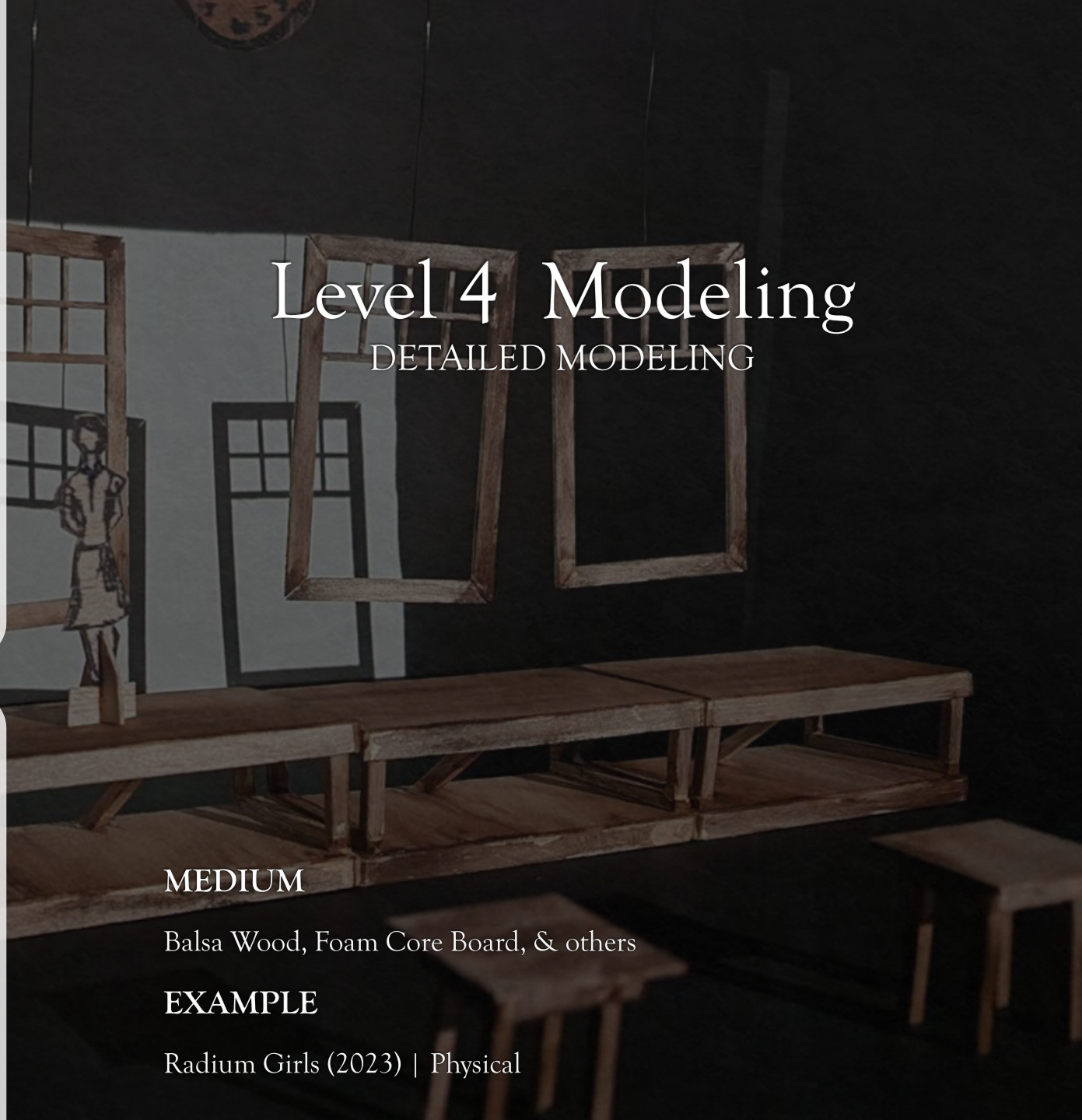
MEDIUM

Google Sketchup

EXAMPLE

Big Fish (2022) | Digital

Level 4 Modeling
DETAILED MODELING

MEDIUM

Balsa Wood, Foam Core Board, & others

EXAMPLE

Radium Girls (2023) | Physical

Level 5 Modeling
PRODUCTION MODELING

MEDIUM

Autodesk Suite, Adobe Creative Suite, Unreal Engine

EXAMPLE

Clue (2020) | Digital

Backstage Fabrications
Practical Application: Macbeth

Director's Vision Board

Production

Performance

MACBETH

VISION

Our Macbeth is set in a post-apocalyptic world forgotten by ten generations of man and manipulated by the fates of fel, void and corruption. Three houses are pinned against each other by witches in a deserted wasteland and we want to watch the audience observe as if this world will continue the all too brutal chain of destruction or if one event can bring about change in any means possible This dark tale hinges on the natural survival of man and the fight for a sense of humanity itself.

COLORS

Land: Black/ Brown/ Grey
Macbeth: Orange
Duncan: Olive
Banquo: Black
Witches: Neon Purple/ Red/ Green

ELEMENTS

DECAY/ DESOLATION
LEATHER/ OBSIDIAN/ BONE
SMOKE/ HAZE
DESERT
LEVELS
AETHERAL ENERGIES
(FEL, VOID, CORRUPTION)

Director's Vision Board

Phase 1: Structural Foundation

Phase 2: Façade Facing

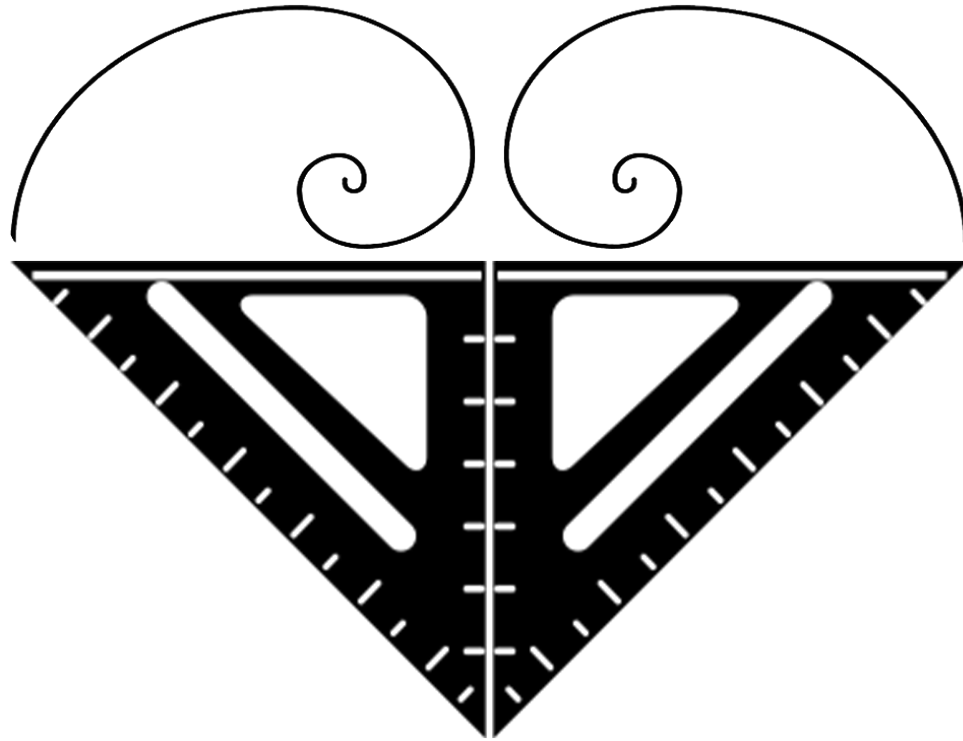Phase 3: Details & Finishing Touches

Phase 4: Tech Week

Performance

Performance

Performance

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