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Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond The Stage

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EMERGING TRENDS: SCENIC DESIGN BEYOND THE STAGE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre

in

The School of Theatre

by
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I'm incredibly grateful to God for His guidance, and blessings along this journey.

I am deeply grateful to my father, my mother, and my niece whose unconditional love, unwavering support, prayers, wisdom, and guidance covered me throughout this journey too. And I'd like to express my warmest thanks to my closest friends who have supported every one of my endeavors in my quest for purpose and greatness.

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ABSTRACT

The role of a scenic designer is so exciting but opportunities to design can fluctuate a bit. While the work is rewarding, the career itself can be much like a gig at times. Then when you factor in a major event such as a global pandemic, where does this leave a scenic designer in terms of employment and livelihood? Are there other possibilities for work with a Master of Fine Arts in Scenic Design? How do we continue to tell stories while providing for ourselves? Have artists considered how these skills are transferrable to other allied fields?

As a scenic design graduate student, I'm approaching graduation during a pandemic. These are some of the many critical questions that come to mind as I prepare to enter the workforce. It encouraged me to question if new coursework could be offered to explore job opportunities and training beyond the stage. Because if nothing else, the pandemic has taught us to adapt and evolve so that we can continue to thrive. Perhaps Scenic Design course offerings could evolve to encompass targeted training where designers unpack their toolboxes and explore the application of skills beyond the theater. Diversifying the scenic design curriculum to incorporate training in allied design areas would expand who we tell stories to. It would also serve a higher purpose in that it would broaden scenic designers range of viable job opportunities.

1. INTRODUCTION

A scenic designers work is so exciting! It involves imagination, creative abilities, technical skills and crafting to create worlds for live performances, but opportunities can be inconsistent at times. While it is rewarding, the career itself can involve a lot of freelancing. And when major life events occur, where does this place a scenic design professional? This piqued my curiosity, how designers maintain livelihood while navigating times of calamity that effect their work. Like other professionals, scenic designers' study, invest time, money, and resources to obtain training for our careers. So how do we maintain a career when our industry experiences halting adversity? And we need to work so what are our alternatives? Is there non-theatrical work available that even aligns with our skillset?

To illustrate this point and attempt to offer solutions to these various questions, I'd like to pose a hypothetical scenario. Imagine that a span of weeks has passed, there is a production up on it legs and the scenic designer can move on to other productions. Except, is there another opportunity that is available? If so, what is the down time between this show and the next? Does the designer also have another job that can bridge the gap between production work? Can one sustain a decent living while working in this profession? These are some of the many critical questions that an artist should contemplate on when considering a career in the theater industry. What are the other possibilities for sustainable work with Master of Fine Arts in Scenic Design? Allied design areas will be identified where scenic design skills can readily be applied.

What inspired this research is March 2019, when so many people began to experience the onset of job losses due to a global pandemic. Acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), otherwise known as, COVID-19. In a matter of weeks, we witnessed global business and

commerce rapidly decline to an eventual halt. Every job industry experienced a degree of impact and to date, many are still recovering from the effects of this global pandemic. Theater, being one of many impacted industries, was cancelled for nearly a year. It's closing left thousands with no income, meager benefits for those who received a benefits package and overwhelming financial crisis. This global pandemic inspired me to question the applicability of the traditional Master of Fine Arts in Scenic Design to other industries. So many contract jobs were cancelled when the pandemic began leaving so many artists displaced. Considering my own trajectory into this industry, I began to think about sustainability for many practitioners in our field. This evolved into deep inquiry on the possibility of sustainable work in this industry.

This research will first discuss how the coursework for an MFA in Scenic Design provides transferrable skills that are useful in allied design fields. It will also propose new course curriculum that offers exploration and training opportunities for scenic designers. This new coursework will introduce students to non-theatrical design opportunities where they can still be visual designers and fabricators. The course content will also expound on the parallels present in the design process and production management aspects existing between theatrical and non-theatrical industries. The coursework being proposed will be designed to supplement graduate level studies. Why graduate studies? One of the premises of graduate school is to strengthen and widen the scope and depth of one's skills in a particular area in hopes to enhance career success. Therefore, students could investigate non-theatrical job opportunities that align with their knowledge and training.

Having students rigorously study theatrical Scenic Design for years and then introduce non-theatrical career exploration my sound illogical. The research provides findings where designers have and are still taking up non-theatrical job opportunities for many reasons, stability

being one of them. By offering coursework like that in which I'm proposing, Scenic Design programs could offer a broader range of use of this skillset to future practitioners resulting in a wider array of job opportunities to explore. As a current graduate student, I'm interested in the development of new coursework because it has the potential to inform, inspire, and cultivate viable opportunities beyond the stage for future designers.

2. EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE INDUSTRY

No one really knew what to expect when the pandemic struck. At its start, I remember feeling like I'd waited for days to get the slightest bit of nonconflicting information from the news and media outlets I'd been following. Something as simple as obtaining groceries required strategy and the search for essentials felt like a hidden treasure quest in a video game. This was the experience of many across the country. It was astounding to see the news reports share how so many lives had become affected by an invisible but ever-present threat. Some people experienced furloughs, and some were released from their positions permanently to protect the bottom line of businesses across the country. "What now?" seemed to be a common question for so many. Along with the rest of the world, loss of work, pay and an overall uncertainty were some of the concerns of many theater artists during this time. With no clear idea on when work would resume, artists were challenged with finding financial support where they could. ("Immigrant Theatre Artists")

With each variant discovery came a continuation of the open again, close again cycle for theaters and production companies. I can't imagine this sequence being good for any business model, pandemic or not. Thus, it resulted in business operations for venues and production companies to suffer financially and find immediate resolve from major financial cuts. Meaning, when theatrical productions began to cancel because of this, I found it critical to explore the economic impacts of the pandemic and its effects on this community.

2.1. LIMITED WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Finding job opportunities as a scenic designer can present its own set of challenges. And when the pandemic brought everything to a halt, it created a huge job insecurity. Many venues closed, resulting in little to no work opportunities available. When theaters were able to resume

productions, I can imagine the odds were even lower to secure an opportunity since each state in the U.S. abided by their own established protocols for shut down, reopening and capacity regulations. These are factors that affect a theatrical venue's ability to open and produce work. Meanwhile, there were other states that did not lift mask mandates for lengthier periods of time through the pandemic, which meant limited capacities in public spaces. Some states began to reopen businesses sooner than others while some maintained closures. Each of these factors directly affect performance-based venues' bottom line and trickle down to the designer.

Seattle based scenic designer, Damon Reaney, shared their experience in an interview with Seattle Times. Reaney was working on a production the day that the shutdown took effect. At the time, they shared, "It's been pretty much impossible to find any work" and "there have been no opportunities for what I went to college for four years for." Because of theater's venue-based foundation, theatrical designers suffer when venues are closed. Designers can't make a living when the doors are closed, and lights are out. Reaney eventually selected to take a job as a grocery clerk, a necessary choice to maintain livelihood. Actors were able to pick up teaching and voice over work among other things to sustain themselves. Many theaters found resolve in transitioning to the digital platforms to put up productions. This solution provided social distancing for the talent and audience alike. Whether these productions are in a theater or office space, the production still needs scenic accoutrements at minimum. But lack of gross income due to the pandemic led to cuts and the disbursement of funds available had to prioritize operational needs. Institutions and venues that produce live performance rely on the freelancers, like Reaney, to produce goods and services. When these entities can't produce shows, designers are unable to work. This interrupts the creative ecosystem that includes freelancers and design firms (OECD).

2.2. INDUSTRY PIVOT: THE PANDEMIC AND CHANGE

So, how exactly did it financially impact our creative ecosystem? The theater industry is one of many subsectors of what is known as the Culture and Creative Industries (forward referred to as CCI's). Two world organizations, UNESCO and OCED, conducted research on the impacts of CCI's resulting from the pandemic. CCI's represented in this measurement of impact research include:

- Performance and Celebration: Performing Arts and Music
- Visual Arts and Crafts i.e., Fine Arts, Arts and Crafts, Photography
- Books and Press i.e., Publishing and Newspapers
- Audio-visuals i.e., Broadcast media, Motion Pictures and Films, Media Productions
- Design and Creative Services i.e., Apparel, Architecture, Marketing, Design

UNESCO-The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation headquartered in Paris, France. They aim to promote world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences, and culture (UNESCO). And OECD-The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, also in Paris, France. They aim to inform, engage, and influence through global sustainable policy development (OECD). UNESCO conducted their study in June 2021. The research aimed to measure the economic effects of the cultural and creative industries gross added value lost due to the pandemic. OECD conducted their research September 2020. Their research sought to reveal how policy can leverage the impacts from loss during the pandemic. The cultural and creative industries were among the first to close at the start of the pandemic and some of the last to reopen. Even after the initial re-openings, many of these businesses dealt with fluctuations due to different variants of the virus. This ultimately caused more inconsistency in their operations.

CCI's represented in this measurement of impact research include Performance and Celebration: Performing Arts and Music, Visual Arts and Crafts: Fine Arts, Arts and Crafts, Photography, Books and Press: Publishing and Newspapers, Audio-visuals: Broadcast media, Motion Pictures and Films, Media Productions and Design and Creative Services: Apparel, Architecture, Marketing, Design. In figure 2.1., the level of economic disruption was extreme for the theater industry. This line of work was rated low in terms of ability to work remotely and adapt to physical distancing requirements. As well, this industry rated high for a dependency on in person audiences as a determining economic factor.

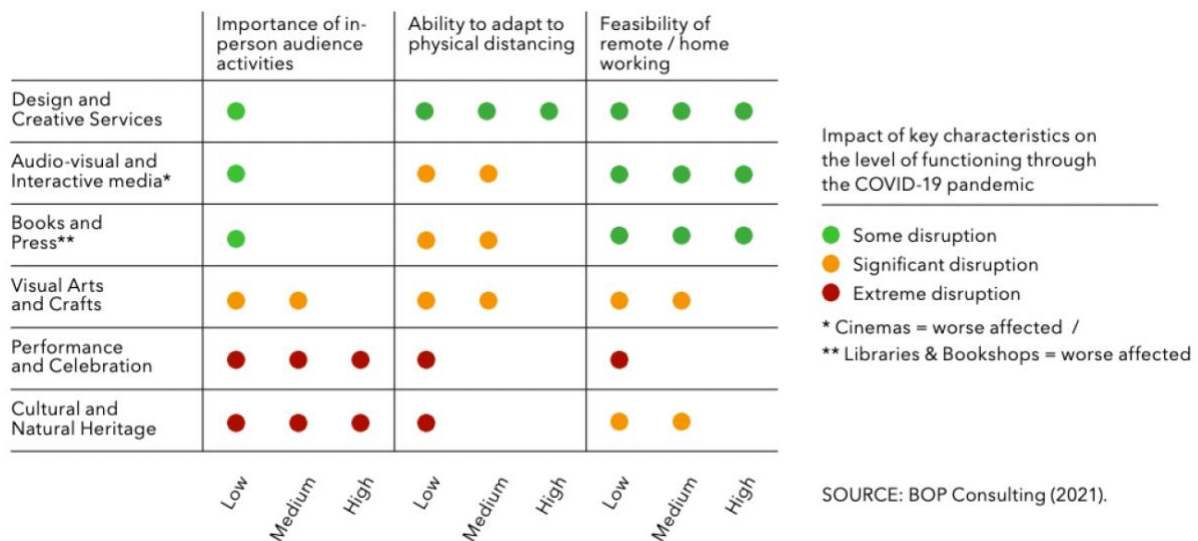


Fig. 2.1. Key characteristics that affected the level of disruption experience across six cultural domains
 UNESCO, www.unesco.org/en/introducing-unesco.
 Source: BOP Consulting, 2021

Our work plays an integral role in economic planning for communities across the country. The implications of the pandemic caused major decline in how our role contributes to economic stimulation. In the figure below, the economic impact at large is referred to as Gross Value Added. Gross value added (GVA) is an economic productivity metric that measures the contribution of a corporate subsidiary, company, or municipality to an economy, producer, sector, or region. Gross value-added measurements directly impact a country's gross domestic

product. A country's gross domestic product is essentially the sum of how much money a country has made from finished goods and services in a specified period of time. As a broad measure of overall domestic production, it functions as a comprehensive scorecard of a given country's economic health (Kenton). In the figure below, it shows that the U.S. experienced a decline of \$750 billion in CCI's production in 2020. This is a 21% decrease as the GVA for 2019 was \$3.4 trillion dollars. The United States was among top countries with the highest CCI GVA fall.

While broad in scope, these loss measurements are pertinent details that begin to explain how the pandemic economically impacted the theater industry. For example, in UNESCO's COVID-19 Economic Impact Outlook article, they shared USA data indicating that performing arts suffered high rates of unemployment in 2020. The United States unemployment rate in late summer 2020 was at 8.5%. Performing artists makeup roughly 45% of that national percentage. The types of artists included in the statistic include actors and dancers. This percentage represents nearly half of the total unemployment percentage. The same article captured statistics provided by Americans for the Arts which reported American artists losing an average of \$21,500 each in creativity-based income in 2020. Because these figures capture a national economic measurement of the performing arts industry, it's difficult to say how scenic designers were directly affected. However, the numbers easily suggest that there is an impact there (e.g., fig. 2.2.).

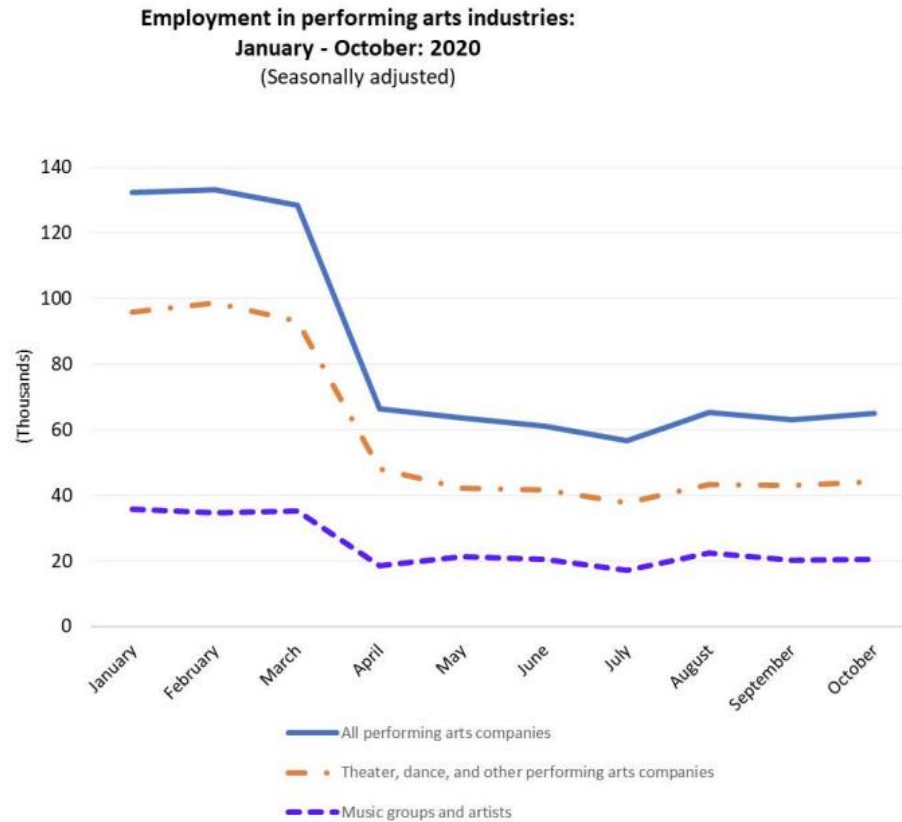


Fig. 2.2. Employment in performing arts industry., January-October 2020.
COVID-19's Impacts on Arts and Culture U.S.
Source: Current Employment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from
COVID-19 RSFLG Data and Assessment Working Group

Many organizations and businesses offered artist support to provide aid. Funds offered to artist ranged from two hundred dollars to several thousand. And grant amounts offered to venues increased significantly. Some of these organizations include Americans for Hearts, ArtWork Achieve, The Obie Awards and ArtistRelief.org are some of the more notable donors. The union IATSE, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, worked diligently to secure relief for their entertainment workers. Freelance entertainment workers were not included in the first CARE Act allowance. IATSE's urge to Congress resulted in allowance distributions for the remaining CARE Act allotments. They were also eligible for all other CARE Act benefits ("Congress Passes 'CARES' Act).

But not all artists were able to receive aid, and yet still other aid recipients did not receive enough to sustain a living. A candidate's financial hardship wasn't the only determining factor for many of these grants. Many of these grants as well as unemployment require the recipient to be a United States citizen, which instantly excluded our immigrant population of theatrical designers. The *Seeing the Light* Foundation geared up to bring awareness to this disparity by fundraising to support our immigrant designers who do not meet the criterion to receive aid. Kimie Nishikawa, a New York based freelance scenic designer, was interviewed by Playbill to share her firsthand experience with this hardship. "There is a lack of resources for low-income immigrant freelance artists in NYC. Applying for unemployment benefits is a huge risk for us, and many times we are not even eligible to receive benefits." At the time this article was written, *Seeing the Light* Foundation fundraising efforts afforded 60 artists grants of \$500 to assist them with the impacts of Covid. This amounts to \$30,000 dollars of aid spread across 60 people who had living expenses with no unemployment or government provided relief. It is important to mention that many organizations like *Seeing the Light* Foundation provided relief funds to theater artists. They answered the need of a demographic that even I have failed to consider until reading the article. And this is one of many circumstances that arose from the pandemic. Still, theater artists were a part of a CCI that made up nearly half of the unemployment rate in 2020. Thus, while these funds were gracious, they were not enough to support the theater community at large.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of research, a survey was distributed to scenic designers with the intent to capture their work experience, application of skills, and level of education obtained. My hypothesis was that scenic designers could apply their skills in allied design work such as interior design, exhibit design, event design and retail design and other possibilities that could create sustainability in their overall design careers. In that, my hope was that data unveiled if designers were actually working in allied design areas. If proven, the results would establish the basis of my claim to develop a targeted training course in scenic design programs with the intent to diversify their scope to include allied industry training.

3.1. QUESTIONNAIRE

I developed a survey using Qualtrics with the intent to capture the work experience, skills used, and education obtained by scenic designers. This survey included eighteen questions and consisted of three sections: 1) Education, 2) Training, 3) Allied Industry (Non-Theatrical) Work. Based on participants' responses, this research can advance my claim as to how the curriculum for scenic design and the application of skills could be diversified to include non-theatrical allied design work. The survey captured participants' experience in allied design work as well as any similarities that they discovered between processes. It was important to ask participants if they completed certain coursework that is commonly found in a scenic design program. The responses helped to determine if these could be considered foundational courses that could help scenic designers branch out into allied design areas. The survey also examined designers' experience with business or managerial aspects of allied industry work. This aspect of the survey helped determine if designers had creative control and how much. The survey also examined the amount of production responsibility they were responsible for and gave insight on the design team

dynamic for allied design industries to theater. Finally, the survey also revealed skills obtained post-academia that participants felt contributed to their design skills for theater and allied design. Recruitment material was created and distributed to obtain participants for this survey. The survey was distributed on social media, specifically, theater artists groups on Facebook. It was also distributed to 33 individuals through an electronic mailing list to participants of a theater artist network. The survey drew 7 participants from the email invitation and 43 from the link provided on social media. The survey results captured 50 responses out of 76 invitations accepted.

3.2. LIMITATIONS

This survey has three main limitations. 1) This survey did not include theme park design or statistics on job loss because of the pandemic. The industry was identified as an allied area after the survey had closed. 2) The survey did not distinguish between designers who were in contracted fulltime positions versus freelancing when researching the pandemic's impact. Having data points for each would have given the reader a stronger sense of impact/loss for scenic designers. 3) Last, it did not request demographical data. Including this information could have provided statistics that captured demographic and socioeconomic data for scenic designers working in allied design areas.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The data yielded results that suggests that: 1) scenic design practitioners were applying knowledge and training beyond theater 2) they used their skills to design and fabricate for exhibits, window display, haunted houses, photo styling and more 3) there are similarities in designing for theater and allied design areas. These findings have been used to substantiate my claim to develop a course of focused study and targeted training in allied design areas.

4. SCENIC DESIGNERS: THE ROLE & PROCESS OF A STORYTELLER

When I think on the role of a scenic designer, I consider of Beowulf Borritt's interview with the American Theater Wing. In it, he states that "scenic designers are visual storytellers that transform spaces over time". This statement captures the essence of my research as I aim to substantiate a need for a targeted training course where scenic designers practice applying their skills in allied design areas. (Scenic Design)

The main role of a scenic designer is to create the scenic look for the world of the play. Typically, this process begins with reading the script and having at least one conversation with the director. The designer is looking for information that will drive the design concept. The designer is also embracing the script's directions provided on the time period and location. The conceptualizing process depends on the conversations with the design team as it establishes the vision for the production. When analyzing the script, the designer is often looking to identify dramaturgical choices and physical elements provided by the playwright. More specifically, the scenic designer is asking the following questions: what's taking place in the world of this play that the designer can glean from text and transform into a visual element in the scenery? What actions of the play drives the plot? How does the plot develop? What is the energy it creates and what shape does it take? These are some of the ways that scenic designers approach the script for design inspiration.

Following the analysis, the designer embarks upon the research aspect of the design process. The goal of the research is to land on a sense of mood and aesthetic for the production that aligns with the director's vision and the dramaturgical findings in the script. Through dedicated research, the designer begins to frame a world. The research can communicate colors that could translate to the mood of a character or time of day. It can establish the style and

demographics of the characters of the world. Research also provides inspirations for paint treatments and architectural details for the scenery. Research isn't limited to an investigation of materials or sources. Research may also be as intricate as participating in immersive experiences that explore social interactions. All in all, research is the seedling of a scenic design.

From there, the designer can begin two-dimensional or three-dimensional roughing to work up preliminary visuals of their concept. Designers use pencil and paper to rough sketch concepts. They may use materials to make miniature mockup models, commonly known as white models, or a collage in a storyboard manner. With the advancements in technology, designers also have the option to digitally render. These are all aids that transform ideas into a three-dimensional space. At this point, the designer is beginning to carve out details like the depth and layers of this world. The beauty of the script is that it often provides information on elements for the designer to draw inspiration from. It is still up to the designer to stylize details such as mood and tempo to sculpt the design and highlight key choices made by the playwright or director. These choices can determine whether the set feels ephemeral and dank or surreal and playful. A scenic designer must be aware of the special needs that the script calls for as well. Many scripts have practical needs that the design must support. For example, in *Tall Girls* by Meg Miroshnik, the play revolves around the lives of a basketball team. The script and action of the play calls for a basketball goal as it is a key scenic factor in the play. It's a necessity for the designer to think in a solution-oriented way as they incorporate these practical needs into their design.

The most critical aspect of a scenic designer's role is collaboration. The theater industry is built on collaborative practices between designers, the production staff, and the actors. The designers synchronize their work to meld the concepts into the space where the production will occur. Sharing process work, research, and final designs helps the team integrate designs into the

shared space. Early in the production process, each designer shares their initial concepts with the design team. They each come prepared to offer explanations and answer questions at this time. These contributions collectively establish the initial design concept of the production itself. The following design meetings will involve more visual references such as polished renderings, technical draftings, and color models to communicate the design.

The color rendering offers a 2D depiction of the design in color, whereas technical draftings offer scaled details of all the items in a production including dimensions and spatial details for the production. These help the director as they begin to make choices like blocking for the actors. However, a color model box allows the director and design team to view a scaled three-dimensional color representation of the production's design. All these visual aids further the development of the design process by visually communicating the design to the other collaborators. Other members of the team are also sharing their progress and design in space and time.

At this point in the process, the scenic designer is providing paint elevations to communicate the painted aesthetical choices chosen to support the story. These paintings often include a color key and any descriptions that offer details on what the designer is looking for. It's also acceptable to provide reference images for the scenic painter as they help communicate the desired aesthetic. These are handed over to the scenic charge artist.

Feasibility meetings are conducted to cost the show. This is where the scenic designer, in collaboration with technical managers, learns if they can proceed with the design or if they need to make cost-conscious revisions. After the succession of meetings with the director and design team, the scenic design is eventually approved and can transition to its next phase. In some cases, the director makes this determination. But each process is unique so the approval may also come

from the technical director, or the design team will collectively decide to move the process forward. However, once it's approved, the design is ready for the next phase of this design cycle which is the build process.

In many cases, the scenic designer may hold the responsibility for selecting props for a production. If so, they supply a properties list to their properties personnel. The props list provides the props personnel with the script's needs for props to better tell the story. The designer should be describing the preferred color use, functionality, size, quantity, and other descriptors so that the props master can best produce these items. The scenic designer needs to be prepared to offer research images and drafting, if needed, to assist the props master in producing the work.

As the scenic elements are erected, the designer can view the progress and communicate thoughts or concerns with the technical director if they arise. As the build reaches its end and the scenery is installed, technical rehearsals commence a week prior to the opening of the production. During these rehearsals, the designer is looking to see how the set performs with the actors and the other design areas. This is the time when the design is closely inspected to determine if there's a need for any modifications. If changes need to occur, the scenic designer communicates this with the technical director, props artisan, and scenic charge artist. The ideal goal is that a solution be reached and executed before the show opens.

While the production is running, the scenic designer becomes more hands-off. Either the technical director or the master carpenter will become the first in line to intercept the problems that may arise. If there is a problem that requires the designer, they are informed so they can decide on how they'd like the issue to be resolved. If there are no issues of concern, the scenic designer concludes their time with the design of the show.

Other aspects of what a scenic designer must understand include planning, budget awareness, knowledge of art and architectural period, and knowledge of materials. Above all, there must be a willingness to learn, as a designer should always be comfortable with constant discovery and experimentation. Planning is a huge aspect of designing because every part of the design process takes time. When a designer understands their skills and how they produce, they can portion their time throughout the process. Every production has a budget where funds allocated should be managed. And the designer should work diligently to stay within their allocated budget.

Knowledge of art and architectural time periods is critical to a designer's work. Having this knowledge provides a starting point for aesthetical choices. For example, many of the recorded works at the beginning of the Western tradition of theatre are from the ancient Greek and Roman periods. At a glance, they are similar in clothing, art, and architectural aesthetics. With period history knowledge, the designer can distinguish and make grounded choices.

Lastly, knowledge of materials is a valuable skill that's important for designers to know. When working as a carpenter on the production of *Rose Tattoo* in my undergraduate program, I recall the scenic designer being torn between material choices for their design. Eventually, they chose corrugated tin as it would support the script's sound design needs. This is an example where knowledge of materials helped the designer make informed choices when selecting. This is normally a design aspect that the technical director handles, yet there are moments when the designer must specify the preferred material to ensure the desired look.

Studying scenic design in graduate school encompasses parts of this process in the early stages of learning. More specifically, in the beginner studio-based courses. These studio projects for scenic design provide opportunities to practice the fully conceptualized design processes. The

student is conducting research to sketch concepts or white models to work through the aesthetic choices gleaned from research. As they begin to prepare technical drawings, they are investing time in how they would technically communicate the design to the technical director. Also, they are practicing how they'd visually communicate the design to the design team and performers.

I've come to see the scenic design process as developing a supporting character in the world of the play because the scenery also contributes to the narrative. Let's consider the touring Broadway musical *Aladdin*. During the musical number "Friend Like Me", the catacomb interior of the cave of wonders is opulently adorned with gold-toned scenery and finishes (e.g., 4.1.). This scenic choice establishes the depths of the genie's endless capabilities.



Fig. 4.1. The North American tour cast of Disney's *Aladdin*, August 31, 2017

Opulent golden cave of wonders where Aladdin meets the Genie.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/theater/ct-ae-aladdin-backstage-0903-story.html>

Scenic Design: Bob Crowley

Photo Credit: Deen van Meer

Architectural choices enhance the emotion and tone of a play. In 2015's run of *Macbeth* at The Vienna State Opera, scenic designer Gary McCann used scenery to communicate these very elements (e.g., 4.2.) He leaned into a Brutalist aesthetic that contributed to the narrative by enhancing a sense of timeliness and psychological void.



Fig. 4.2. Scenic design of Macbeth by Gary McCann
Featured in *Scenography Today*, December 14, 2016
www.scenographytoday.com/gary-mccann-macbeth
Scenic Design: Gary McCann
Photo credit: Michael Pohn

While the scenery is naturally silent in its display, it too can be a character that visually narrates the theatrical play. In conclusion, scripts often reveal a variety of scenic components to account for when designing a play. And the scenic designer helps to visually narrate those scenic components to help tell the story.

5. MFA FOR SCENIC DESIGN STUDIES

The overall intent of my research is to propose new coursework for scenic design programs that will apply the skillsets of scenic designers to allied design fields. The intent of the course is to explore unconventional job opportunities in fields that could include but aren't limited to gaming design, interior design, theme park design, exhibit design, event design, retail design, experience design and advertising design. This was initially inspired by the freelancing aspect of this line of work. When I began my graduate career in scenic design, I often thought about the viability of the practice and while I have great aspirations to design theatrically. I never wanted to be limited to this one industry. When the global pandemic occurred early 2020, it heightened my existing thoughts on the viability of this industry and my coursework. I am passionate about exploring sustainability in this practice, specifically by proposing an expansion of the existing curriculum for scenic design.

Further into presenting my research, I'll share the course I'm proposing which is 'Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond the Stage'. Briefly, it is a course designed for the exploration of other industries and professions where scenic design skills can be applied. It's important to examine the current curriculum being offered in scenic design programs before I discuss how my idea can begin to supplement it. I'll describe the intent of the courses offered in the selected programs and I'll illustrate how I believe these design skills can transfer to other allied design fields.

5.1. REVIEW OF PROGRAMS

The study of scenic design at the graduate level aims to further a student's knowledge and ability to design for theater. The curriculum includes coursework that develops a student's skills for researching, interpreting, and analyzing scripts while also enhancing their theatrical art

skills. The comprehensive objective of the coursework aims for students to apply their collection of skills to conceptualized projects and realized designs. My research aims to accomplish three points: 1) broaden the available course offerings, 2) propose a new course for non-theatrical conceptualized projects and realized designs, and 3) expand the scenic design training so that the application of this knowledge and skills can create more opportunities for scenic designers in the new allied areas.

I reviewed the Master of Fine Arts curriculum for Scenic Design at ten universities in the United States. These casually selected programs included state institutions and some with conservatory-style approaches. Each of these programs offers classes that introduce new skills and strengthen existing skills of varied kinds, all of which are needed for this profession. In reviewing these programs, I gained an individual understanding of their scenic designer curriculum and was able to see if they offered targeted training courses for allied design areas. Unfortunately, the results revealed that none of the programs provided this exactly, but each program offered courses that would allow a student to create their own learning paths that may facilitate their work in an allied industry at some point in their career.

From my program examinations, I found that the emphasis of the curriculum varied to promote a diversified set of skills that can be used in non-theatrical design work. For example, in my Advanced Scene Design III at Louisiana State University, we were offered the opportunity to produce an immersive exhibit design. The objective was to analyze a song to develop a concept for the design. The assignment involved theme development, research, ground plan (e.g., fig. 5.1.) and rendering (e.g., fig. 5.2.) of the conceptual design. I selected the song *Collateral Damage* from the Afro Pop artist Burna Boy's *African Giant* album. This assignment afforded me the opportunity to see how I could apply my training in an allied design area. My concept for

the installation asked patrons to consider how they could become more responsible citizens who were encouraged to develop and maintain a more equitable society? I explained that the wealthy strata of our population should not have influence over politics and government the way that they do. Patrons were asked to consider how this reality affects our health care systems, the middle and poor class, job opportunities, countless resources, the elderly and more. As patrons walk through the installation, they would encounter a dual reality in one space. The installation would portray current conditions along with new possibilities. They see installations within the exhibit portraying our society could be if we made different choices, taxed properly, and paid proportionately. The objective was to show how we have power to create a more equitable society.

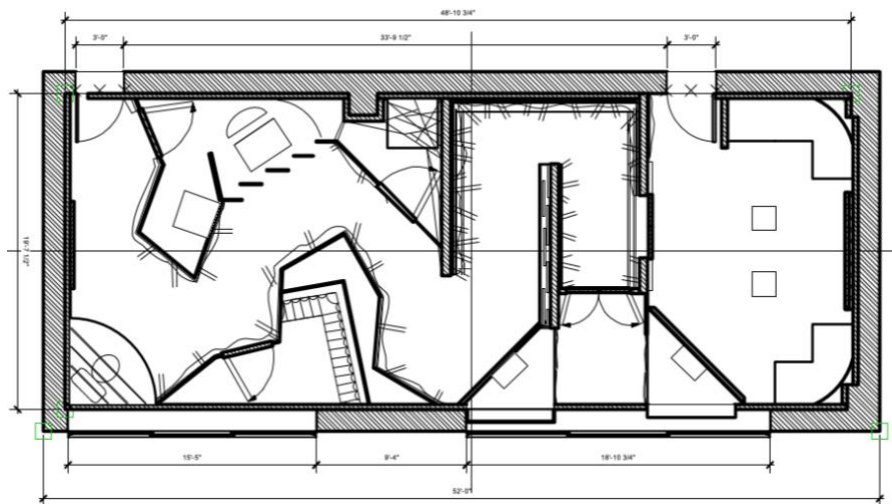


Fig. 5.1. Advanced Scene Design III, immersive exhibition design project.
1/4" = 1'0" scale ground plan.

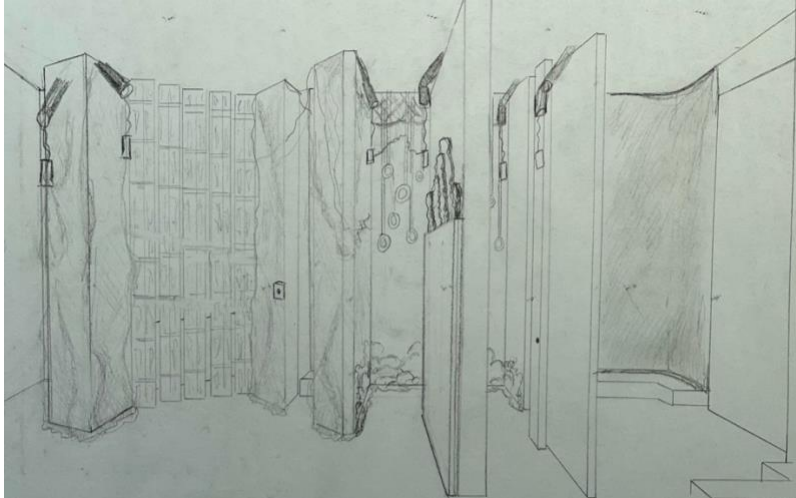


Fig. 5.2. Advanced Scene Design III, immersive exhibition design project.
Perspective sketch of concept.

Other examples include Theatrical Architecture (THEA 6513) at the University of Memphis where students can learn about theatrical building structures and Studies in Puppetry (DRAMA 5603) at The University of Connecticut which highlights the skill of visual storytelling. My program examination revealed a similar collection of core courses offered by each of the programs. These courses included Script Analysis, Scene Painting, CAD I, CAD II, Hand Drafting, Hand Drawing, Scenic Design 1-3, Rendering (pencils, wet mediums, and digital), Properties I, and Properties II. The courses are briefly described below in table 5.1.

Table 5.1. MFA in Scenic Design program examination for course similarities

Script Analysis	teaches designers how to identify elements within the text that can and analyze it. Designers learn to capture critical components such as tone, subtext, character motivations and inspirations, and setting for the world of the experience. These assist the designer in identifying elements of scripts that could contribute to the aesthetic and functionality of a scenic design.
Computer-Aided Design	enables designers to create technical renderings on a digital platform rather than by hand. CAD software offers many tools to create with and they allow for follow distribution of renderings. This software allows designers to offer a technical drawing that communicates their ideas.

(table cont'd.)

Table 5.1. MFA in Scenic Design program examination for course similarities

Hand Drafting	is similar in the skill to draft. But the student learns to produce technical drawings by hand. This involves gaining an understanding of led weights to communicate structural information. There are various drafting tools they'll learn such as lettering devices, scaled rulers, triangle rulers, and French curves. Each of these assists with producing draftings that are scaled and have clean lines. The student also learns about paper types that work well for hand drafting.
Scene Painting	educates designers on paint techniques for theater. It instills an understanding of tools and materials used to paint in large scale for theater. Elements of the curriculum include scale and proportion, brush techniques for texturing as well formatting and layering. Students gain skills on how to add texture, create dimension and depth as well weather and distress.
Rendering courses	included hand rendering and digital rendering. Both prepare a designer to use tools and materials to create scaled or non-scaled drawings. Much like scenic painting, students gain skills on how to add texture, create dimension and depth as well weather and distress. These courses differ from scenic painting in that, the skill prepares one to present visuals of a smaller size.
Properties Design	teaches a designer to create, source, or modify objects used in theatrical productions. The curriculum teaches designers tools, materials, and processes that assist a designer in making or modifying objects. These could be handheld items such as a coffee cup, a costume-designed walking cane, or a vase that's meant to shatter when touched.

In general, the curriculum for these programs intends to develop skills for designing single-set plays, multi-location scenic designs, non-linear script constructs as well as non-traditional spaces. Each program required between two units and four units of a scenic design course. The most advanced scenic coursework I found was offered at the University of Connecticut and Ohio State University. At the University of Connecticut, students have an opportunity to conceptualize designs for musicals, opera, multi-location scripts. At Ohio State, they offer production design for film. Each of these courses develops a designer's ability to visually convey a concept with technical communication tools. Additionally, the courses provide experience for practitioners to apply the knowledge to various spaces where each has a unique configurational need.

It is worth mentioning that there are programs in the United States who exclusively offer degree programs in experiential and immersive design. Some of these include Florida State University and the University of Colorado at Boulder.

5.2. TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Scenic design is more than designing stage scenery for theatrical plays. Scenic design is inspired by words, moods, temperature, a myriad of conditions, imagination and so much more. If I was to use nontheatrical terminology, I would say that we use the same inspirations previously mentioned to create a display in a space. Starting from simple words that spark inspiration, a scenic designer develops an object that represents a collection of inspirations. This collection of inspirations visually tells a story to the audience.

Therefore, I believe that the training in a scenic design curriculum can lead to designers utilizing their skills in allied design fields. Think of some of the largest retail stores across the country such as Macy's and Bloomingdales or even luxury brands like Hermes (e.g., fig. 5.3.). They are well known for developing extravagant displays that are visually compelling. These displays are designed to engage spectators' interest, but they also establish a mood and visual for the brands.



Fig. 5.3. “Dreams on Display, Seoul The Handmade Mishmash” Window display for Hermes store located in Seoul.
<https://www.hermes.com/ca/en/story/115516-ieditopagechristmaswindows2017allcountries>

The retail chain, Anthropologie, allows its displays to infuse the entire retail space. Their approach aesthetically develops an atmosphere that promotes the business and marketing objectives. Even when you consider art exhibits and installations, such as Meow Wolf or Candytopia, the design is art that can be experienced or creates an experience. The patron becomes engaged in a world created for them to see and/or touch. The additional sensory option of touch aids in enhancing the development of the story intended for the patron to experience. The FOMO Factory in Houston, Texas is an immersive exhibition where patrons can interact and play in seventeen rooms designed to evoke memories from childhood to adulthood. It is a multisensory design that encourages interactivity. Be it retail design or artistic exhibitions, there is a story or theme that’s developed to drive these concepts and attract viewers.

I imagine that scenic design programs could incorporate targeting training that offers students opportunities to explore what it looks like to be a designer and collaborator in other industries. From the survey data I was able to conclude that there is a need for this type of career

exploration. The survey captured responses from fifty participants with college-level degrees who produce scenic design work. The survey revealed that 70% of the participants had experience with designing for allied design industries. I wanted to capture the types of allied design experience that my participants had so I offered several options for them to select. This included gaming design, interior design, exhibit/exhibition design, event design, retail design, experience design, and advertising art design (e.g., fig. 5.4.). Of these selections, the highest percentages selected for allied industry fieldwork were for Event Design, Exhibit/Exhibition Design and Retail Design.

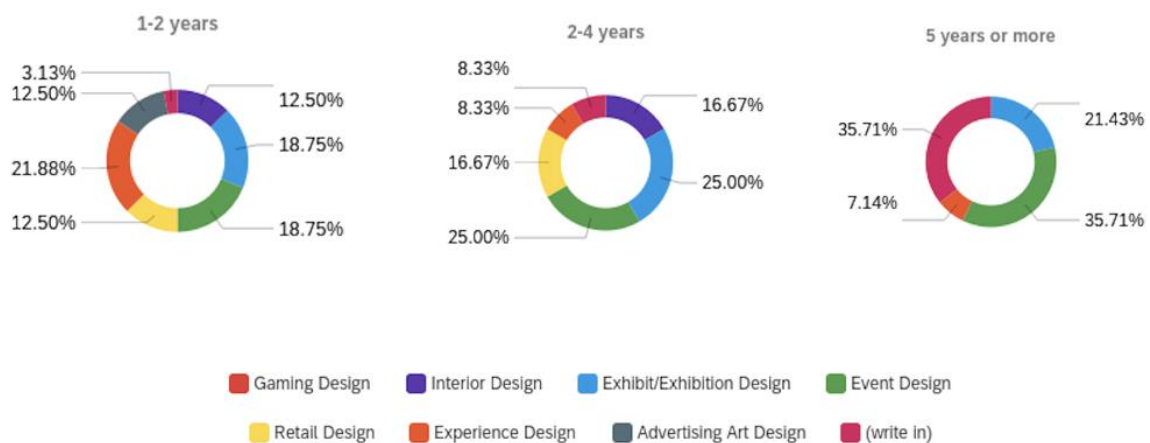


Fig. 5.4. Survey participants response on allied design experience in the listed areas from 1-5 years.
Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond the Stage, Qualtrics data for section 3, question 3.
 by Kellie N. Murphy

Participants could also input other design experience I may have missed and select a period that best described their experience in these areas. These surveyors wrote film, haunted houses, restaurant design, parade floats, event planning/management, installation art and television. 35.71% of the surveyors had five years of experience or more in these additional areas. I provided a collection of courses commonly offered in scenic design programs. Participants were asked to select any courses they completed in academia. They also selected courses that they felt contributed to their non-theatrical work opportunities (e.g., 5.5.).

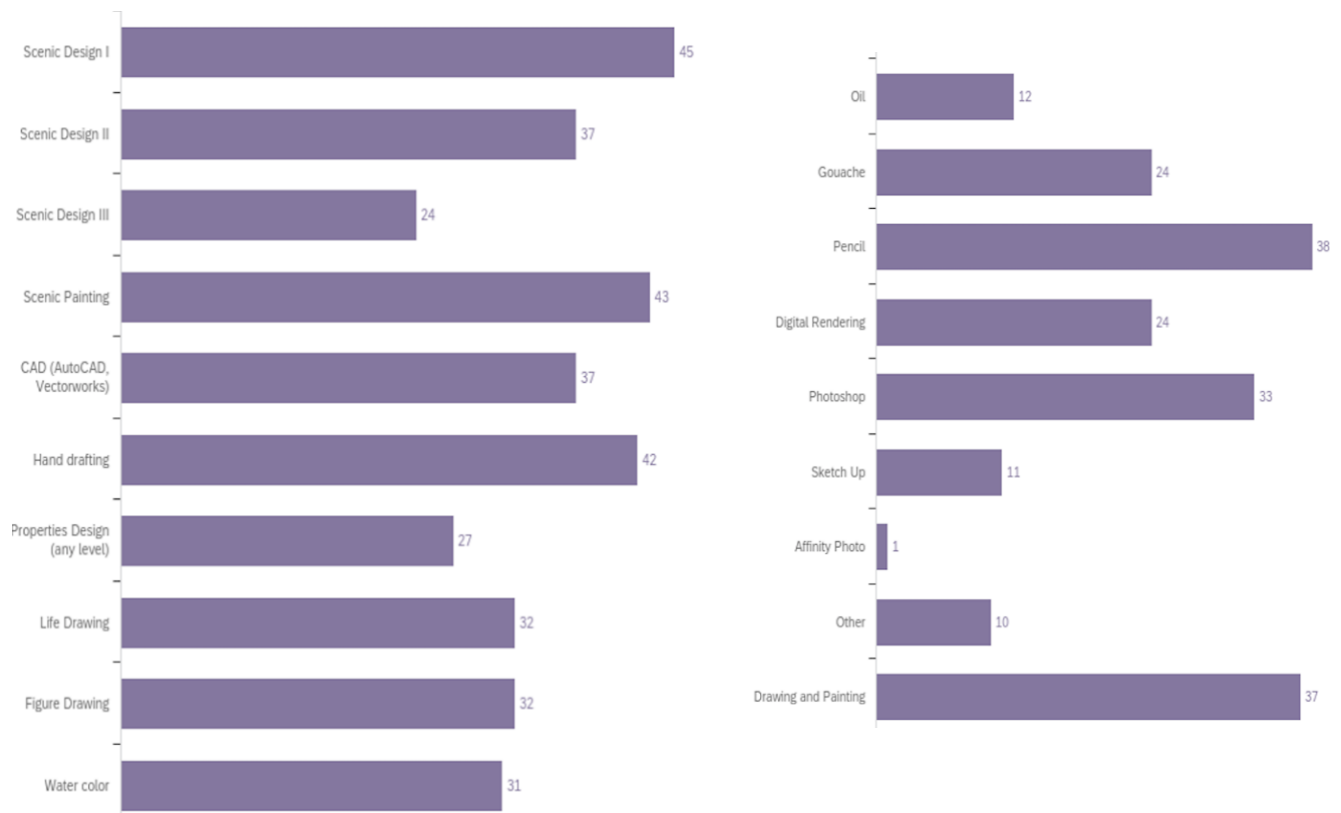


Fig. 5.5. Survey participants response question regarding courses taken in their scenic design program.
Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond the Stage, Qualtrics data for section 1, question 2.
 by Kellie N. Murphy

The intention of these questions was to gain an understanding of the participants' training and if it developed the foundational framework of their skillsets in their non-theatrical work (e.g., fig. 5.6.). The data overwhelming revealed that participants not only found courses offered in scenic design curriculum to be useful in allied design fields, but it also showed that a wide array of theatrical training was transferred into allied industry design opportunities.

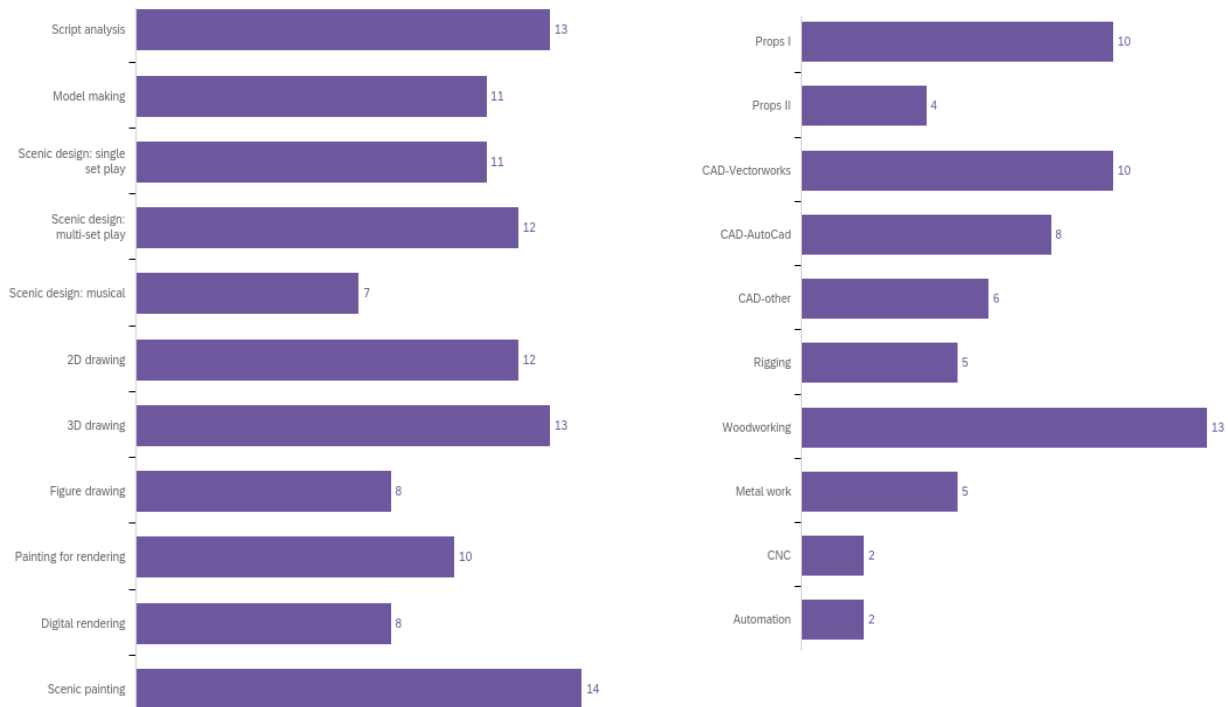


Fig. 5.6. Survey participants response for courses they believe prepared them for allied design work.
Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond the Stage, Qualtrics data for section 3, question 4.
 by Kellie N. Murphy

5.3. BROADENING THE SCOPE OF STUDY FOR AN MFA IN SCENIC DESIGN

The data demonstrates that participants in this survey have diversified their own application of the scenic design skillset. Thus, for the sake of my research, I aiming the data establish precedence for targeting training to exist. Sustainable practices have become a popular topic in this industry for actors, designers, and those in other technical positions. While it's critical that we continue this dialogue at large, I believe we could explore practices for scenic design as scenic designers are already implementing new uses. By teaching future designers how to apply their skills beyond the stage, we are fostering a learning environment that offers sustainable career options and solutions where their skills can be further utilized. Because what good is the training if you can't get a job where you can apply your skills and experience?

I asked survey participants with allied design industry experience to share their motivations and reasons for becoming involved with non-theatrical design work. I intended to capture imbedded information within these motivations that could possibly explain their choice. Some of the participants picked up experience through freelancing opportunities, some through networking, and some by invitation for special commissions or over hire needs. For example, one participant shared that while working at a high-end jewelry store, they were approached to create window displays for the store. In these instances, the participants' ingenuity led them to gain lucrative allied experiences. This enhances the intent of my research because these designers understood how they could utilize their skills beyond the stage. Another participant stated that there were limited theaters in their area, and it was difficult breaking into the theatrical scene. Another mentioned that industry-related fields were a great source of income for them while still pursuing work in the theater. Yet another participant shared that they chose to take a job in corporate event design for a few years because of the stability it offered and another shared that they were simply interested in design adjacent opportunities where they could apply their skills and training.

Overall, while these intentions are snapshots of the scenic designer population, the data illustrates how advancing career readiness and diversifying skills training for this profession could promote more sustainability in this work. As a result, it could subsequently increase academic programs recruitment and retention.

Another discovery from the survey pertained to script analysis. Interpreting the story is a critical aspect of this line of work. It leads to foundational findings that develop the aesthetics of theatrical plays. I asked the participants to share if they applied script analysis to interpret and produce allied work. They were able to select yes or no for time, period, physical location,

geographical locale, mood, and theme. In response, 78% of them selected yes for each of the elements of script analysis that were provided. This proves that the ability to interpret stories dramaturgical is another foundational skill that can be applied to allied design industry work.

Overall, the data established a precedence that substantiates my theory to broaden scenic design curriculum. I imagine that offering a targeted training course for allied design exploration could increase the scope of job opportunities available to scenic designers. And more job opportunities could create more chances for stable living.

6. INVESTIGATING ALLIED DESIGN WORK

The research prior to this chapter was intended to assess the training and skill set of a scenic designer and identify reasons why scenic designers should learn about other applications of their skill set. In this chapter I am examining allied design areas for the purpose of identifying alternative applications of the skill set to expand job opportunities. Furthermore, this is to help designers seeking new opportunities due to a need or simply for personal interest.

I've chosen to discuss two allied design areas where I believe scenic designers can apply their skills. The results of my blind survey advanced my theoretical claim when it revealed that participants had produced work allied design areas. These areas included: gaming design, interior design, exhibit design, event design, retail design, experience design, advertising art design, installation art, restaurant design, parade float, film, haunted houses television, event planning and venue management. Endeavoring to expound on the correlations that exist between skills used in all the allied design areas and scenic design was too large of a venture. For this research, I've chosen to focus on two of those areas: 1) visual merchandising- window display artist and 2) immersive design: modern art, exhibits and installations. One is a visually implemented marketing strategy and the other provides varying levels of immersive entertainment. Both have employed skilled scenic design practitioners, which is so astonishing.

The inspiration for this chapter is the concept of storytelling. I remember growing up and listening to stories during story time in grade school. It was so exciting for me because I would develop the world of these stories in my imagination. As the aspects of the story would unfold, I'd listen with my eyes closed so that I could focus even more closely on the world I was curating in my mind. It felt as though I was a part of the story! That is the power story telling.

Scenic designers use imagination and interpretation to give life to words in the form of visual art known as a scenic design. We study and practice to become storytellers. In this following section, I'll be sharing information about allied design areas that utilize visual storytelling. These are just two of some possibilities where scenic designers can use their toolbox of skills.

6.1. RETAIL VISUAL MERCHANDISING- WINDOW DISPLAY ARTIST

As an artist, I've always been intrigued by elaborate window displays. I've always found their most fascinating aspects to be the aesthetical choices that were executed to convey a concept. Because of their scale and proximity to viewers, there is incredible detail that goes into this practice. Like theatre, their concept has a purpose. In this case, the intent is to engage customers by creating a shopping experience that influences sales. This is a strategy used in business by way of marketing and its sole objective is to attract window shoppers into the store and hopefully purchase merchandise. This business concept results in an immersive shopping experience where the customers are always submersed in the aesthetic of the brand which makes them feel connected and drives sales.

There are staff who work to execute the aesthetics for retail spaces. These artists use design skills to create the concepts and fabricate scenery and props for retail window displays. Like theatre, art directors and lead visual merchandisers operate the way a director would, in that, they establish the overall desired initial concept for the retail brand. Lead merchandisers work in store and at the corporate level, whereas art directors work at the corporate level. The display artist, like the scenic designer in theatre, would work within the given desired initial concept to actualize displays (e.g., fig.6.1.). Like theatre, continuity is a key aspect in display art. The displays created for the window and front of the store establish the desired look. The display artist is also responsible for carrying this artist theme throughout the space, paying attention to

layout. They collaborate with management to select the best staging areas where the art can be most effective.



Fig. 6.1. Window display for Elysium
by designers Julia Petrenko and Svetlana Lifer of You_Lab, Ukraine.
www.behance.net/juliapetrenko
Photo credit: You_Lab

First, I'll start by sharing the names of titles for this type when I conducted a Google search. They include Display Artist, Display Coordinator, Visual Merchandiser, Window Trimmer, Exhibit Display Coordinator I, II & III. I feel that this is important to know for future job seekers if they venture down the career path. Because it's easier and much more productive of a search when you know what to seek out. While the titles vary, the overall combination of skills that are sought after including the ability to conceptualize, develop artistic renderings, produce physical or 3D rendered mock up's, understand materials and how to manipulate them, painting and various fine arts abilities. It's also important to have good communication skills and be a team player as the display artist works with management at the corporate and store level during design process. Mainly, the artist should have a working knowledge and ability for design and fabrication of compelling environments through the application of display. It is also highly preferred that they possess technical design experience along with their artistic proficiency according to StyleCareers.com when pursuing these types of jobs. So, this type of role itself does

not require a degree, but it does ask for a well-established level of skill to be successful in the role.

In the technical and artistic scope, scenic designers can produce technical drawings, render artistically, produce physical or 3D rendered mock up's are either by hand or digitally. We work with directors to fulfill their vision whereas display artists collaborate with visual merchandising and the brands creative marketing team. What this means is, we have the rendering abilities to support and produce concepts for creative marketing teams in retail who seek branding solutions. We analyze scripts and glean ideas from it to develop concepts. So, we are equally efficient at transforming ideas into unique concepts that produce distinctive visuals for marketing. With our drafting abilities we are increasingly hireable as we can provide even more concise visual proofs of concept. We are capable of manipulating materials, to provide mock up's and produce final display art works. Upon completion, we have collaborated in a process where we've developed scenery that works to tell a story with an intended purpose. We analyze scripts and glean ideas from it to develop concepts.

When I chose the research topic, I began researching retail brands that utilized window display art as a part of their marketing strategy. I found that several popular brands and many independent brands utilize this concept. Gucci, Zara, Anthropologie, Versace, Macy's, Bloomingdales, Louis Vuitton, and Hermes are among the most common. Of those mentioned, I found Hermes window displays to be marvelous in how they closely resemble theatrical scenic designs.



Fig. 6.2. “Journey of a Lifetime” Window display for Hermès, Shanghai 2022.
By designers Zim and Zou, France
<https://zimandzou.fr/journey-of-a-lifetime>
Courtesy of Hermès Japan

Researching brands that employ window display marketing concept provided a great understanding of how these businesses utilized scenic design to captivate an audience. Hermès, like other retail brands, “correlate their window display and aesthetics with the release of new marketing campaigns” (Mesher). The display works to establish a theme that supports the brands roll out. With continuity, the display art itself has features that connects shoppers to the merchandise by color, textures, patterns, a feeling or thought that the art is aims to evoke (Mesher). In the image above, the display artist Zim and Zou created a display with a colorful pastel composition with geometric shapes and lines on top of layers which add texture and over appealing dimensionality. On their website, they share their concept and describe how the merchandise is a part of the world the story. They stated, “this artwork titled “Journey of a Lifetime”, illustrates the concept of how we ourselves are the heroes of our own odyssey. The spaceship’s cockpit, both complex and mysterious, is a metaphor for life and the choices we must make. The main character, seen from behind, is exploring the universe as he travels his own

life. His goal is right in front of him, and he will do everything to reach it. Memories, along with his most precious items, are following him in this adventure. The opened safe sets many of his treasures free, flying around in weightlessness” (Zim & Zou - Journey of a Lifetime). Zim and Zou’s designed worked to support Hermes merchandise like that featured in the next image below. The handbag itself is a vibrant matte color with an overall geometric form, both of which are resembled in the surrounding scenery.



Fig. 6.3. “Journey of a Lifetime” Window display for Hermes, Shanghai 2022.

By designers Zim and Zou, France
<https://zimandzou.fr/journey-of-a-lifetime>
Courtesy of Hermès Japan

There are also design groups that exclusively work to offer these services to retail brands. So, while artist like Zim and Zou are freelance, commercial scenic shops like such as The Lionesque Group, Spaeth Designs and Brighton Studios produce display art as well. Spaeth Design for example, defines themselves as a creative services firm that curates window displays and are popularly known for creating holiday window displays. They’ve used scenic design and technology for several decades to craft scenic stories and crowd build (e.g., fig. 6.4.). The range of services that this firm offers includes window display, pop-up retail design and fabrication, scenic painting, scenic design, CNC routing, drafting, laser cutting, 3D printing and along with

several other services. This company offers services in nearly every course area in many scenic design programs.



Fig. 6.4. Snow White window display, Saks Fifth Avenue,
By Spaeth Design
<https://www.spaethdesign.com/work/>

The image above is another example of scenic storytelling beyond the stage by Spaeth Design. When analyzing this image, I identified several correlations between this window display and scenic design. The design incorporates portals resembling a stone wall, a village and tree branches. The design also has an arch like structure that is framing the perspective of this design, similar to that of a false proscenium. Last, there's scenic backdrop that supports the layering portals and adds depth that strengthens the theme of a forest. These are common scenic structures used that are used in theater and were used to create this elaborate window display.

I made it a personal quest to learn more about art and design at large when I began pursuing this career. I studied abroad to gain influence from design abroad. This afforded me the opportunity to meet people from various design backgrounds. From that experience, I learned of designers Studio Noa Verhofstad. In following their work, I came to discover that they matriculated with a degree in theater arts as well. This designer now produces display art, among other works, at

their own creative agency and produce display artistry for retail brands. Interestingly, they too have had the experience of designing for the Hermes store in Paris where they produced an Odyssey themed concept as well.

The display expands across several windows and tells a story of little sailors journeying underwater. I selected four images from the collection of displays this artist produced for Hermes in Paris. In each, you'll see how the artist develops, what are quite like box models, where each shares a glimpse of an underwater odyssey experience. The top left image (e.g., fig. 6.5.) is a full view of image two where we see a voyager in submarine that is traveling through marine plant shaped pieces and the oyster like scenic element that is displaying the merchandise. The artist carefully features one of Hermes' bags by dressing it as a fish swimming through this little village. The top right image (e.g., fig. 6.6.) is a close-up of the oyster like scenic element, and nods to the pearl being the Hermes bag. In the bottom left, (e.g., fig. 6.7.) the designer used material to develop an underwater village that sits between a gradient blue seascape and marine like plants. The bottom right image (e.g., fig. 6.8.) is a voyager whose accomplished a great challenge. We see them celebrate at the top of a mountain like structure that is surrounded by Hermes merchandise as a shiny colorfully sea creature swims through. With an odyssey being Hermes' theme of this year, this incorporates the merchandise as a part of the design in addition to displaying it. It was interesting to see how the designer applied theatrical training when developing this display considering the number of windows that needing designing for this retail space. The images provided below showcase only four of the several offered on the designer's website.



Fig. 6.5.



Fig. 6.6.



Fig. 6.7.



Fig. 6.8.

Fig. 6.5. Submarine voyage
 Fig. 6.6. Hermes purse, as a pearl resting in oyster like scenic element
 Fig. 6.7. Underwater village featuring Hermes purse as fish swimming along
 Fig. 6.8. Hermes merchandise staged around voyager celebrating
 Window display *The Human Odyssey*, Hermes Rue de Faubourg Paris, 2022
 By Studio Noa Verhofstad
<https://noaverhofstad.nl>

Noa Verhofstad's background in theater arts was very evident in how she executed a story for multiple windows and maintained continuity across the spaces. Each nook offers a miniature scenic design that speaks to an aspect of the overall story. I could see how the designer implemented storyboarding to actualize a design that would live in several window nooks. As in storyboarding, each nook offers conveys a portion of the overall story of the *Human Odyssey* in the Figures 6.5. through 6.8. In theatrical terms, it's as though the designer deconstructed the scenic design process, extracted, and actualized scenic looks, and tailored the concept for this space. It's very possible to see how this unique window display was created by a theatre designer and furthermore how the skillset is being applied in allied design industries. Therefore, when investigating this profession through a creative lens, window display artistry presents additional and/or alternative design job opportunities where a scenic design professionals skillset aligns with the needs for the allied profession.

6.2. IMMERSIVE DESIGN-MODERN ART EXHIBIT & INSTALLATION

Modern art exhibit and installations are very popular in the entertainment attraction sector of commerce in our nation (UNESCO). Immersive art is an experience that spans back to the 1950's according to the Tate Museum in London (Tate). According to the historic records, interactive art began in the late 50's in parallel with artists' desires to find less alienating and exclusive environments in which to show art. Art became more participatory and inclusive (Tate). So, it is not a new form of artistic expression, however, the trendy themes are quite new and exciting. The creation of exhibits that encompass interactive installations involve a creative team that curates, fabricates and installs the exhibits. So, I felt that it was important to visit some exhibits to gain an understanding of the aesthetic and design for these types of experiences. For this research, I investigated Candytopia, and the FOMO Factory exhibits.

The emergence of them in our society is strongly motivated by the target market in our society and how they best respond to art. When art exhibits are social media friendly, the limited-time aspect, visually appealing and interactive, they are attracting a higher level of interest according to Sparks an experiential marketing agency that creates smart, unforgettable brand moments for activations, events, trade show exhibits, digital and retail. (“Experiential Marketing: Create Unforgettable Brand Moments”).

This is a company that creates virtual events, trade show design, experiential design, content development and retail store design. These types of multi-sensory experiences depend on designers and fabricators to develop these spaces. Candytopia for example, is a candy art exhibit that developed from a candy themed events company founded by Jackie Sorkin. Jackie’s love for sculpting sweet scenery evolved into an exhibit when an executive retail industry mogul began noticing her work. They inspired here to grow her themed event into a retail experience. Candytopia has been in operation for four years and has toured across the country. “Visitors see dozens of rooms filled with highly photographable and hypothetically edible art, like candy “paintings” and sculptures” said Caleb Pershan with *Eater Inside Magazine* (Pershan). When Sorkin began evolving her event company into an experience, she hired an L.A. based scenic designer and fabricator Zac Hartog to execute the exhibits design. This designer has a background in entertainment arts, design and fabrication and it is evident when viewing Candytopia. Most of the installation is made of real candy but some items, such as they marshmallows in the pool, are sourced material that resemble candy. Each room has a unique theme where candy helps hone the aesthetic. Sorkin and Hartog collaborated to determine all the details that brought this exhibit to life, this means every morsel of candy was accounted for.

In the image below, the designer created a seascape with candy sculpted seahorses and plant life (e.g., fig. 6.9.). The seahorses are slightly upstage of a blue scenic wall structure that resembles an underwater terrain.



Fig. 6.9. Candy seahorses in the underwater area seascape at Candytopia Art Exhibit, San Francisco, 2018
<https://sf.eater.com/2018/9/6/17827904/candytopia-instagram-photos-exhibit-tickets-san-francisco>
Photography by: Patricia Chang

The next image captures a view of the employees of Candytopia welcoming patrons into the space (e.g., fig. 6.10.). Hartog designed a wall with mechanical clock elements, but the walls retract to reveal the path patron take as they journeyed through a ‘sweet’ adventure. The process to draft, explore materials, paint, load-in and install for this exhibit are skills that Hartog learned as a scenic designer.



Fig. 6.10. Guides escort guests through clock designed retractable walls at the entrance of the exhibit.
 Candytopia Art Exhibit, San Francisco, 2018
<https://sf.eater.com/2018/9/6/17827904/candytopia-instagram-photos-exhibit-tickets-san-francisco>
 Photography by: Patricia Chang

The other exhibit that I investigated was the FOMO Factory based in Houston, TX. The designer, Rachel Youens, was first inspired by her time at adult summer camps, where campgoers would set aside their names and everyday lives and come up with new, carefree identities, according to the brands Houston press release (“The FOMO Factory - an Immersive Journey through Childhood Nostalgia”). The inspiration resulted in an immersive exhibit that takes patrons on a journey from childhood through adulthood, spanning across seventeen rooms. Each room is dressed with scenery and scenic dressing designed to recapture childhood memories. The founder named it FOMO, from the fear of my missing out acronym. But in the Paper City Magazine interview, they joyfully admitted that they “celebrate this idea of JOBI”, joy of being in at the FOMO Factory (Gallay).

The FOMO Factory is heavily dependent on scenic installations and scenic dressings to sustain their nonchronological interactive and nostalgic experience. When I visited this exhibit last summer, I saw how the experience provided an interactive component, several props and a scenic design that conveyed the theme of each of the seventeen rooms. This exhibit offered

simpler scenic structures than Candytopia, but it was apparent that a scenic concept was utilized to execute the exhibit. Seventeen rooms, with completely different themes and they each required different scenic pieces to aid in the interactive aspect of storytelling, wall, ceiling and floor treatment and props (e.g., fig. 6.11.-6.14.). Scenic design training prepares designers to execute this type of work. And something interesting about this company is that they offered artistic fellowships for artist of various mediums and practices to become co-creators that assist in the thematic development, fabrication, and technical maintenance.



Fig. 6.11.



Fig. 6.12.



Fig. 6.13.



Fig. 6.14.

Fig. 6.11. *Birthday celebrations room*

Fig. 6.12. *Childhood play time*

Fig. 6.13. *Chemistry class*

Fig. 6.14. *High school days*

Four of seventeen themed rooms designed to present a nostalgic journey down memory lane
FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) FOMO Factory Houston and Austin, Texas.
Paper City Magazine

While the FOMO Factory and Candytopia are very different in their craftsmanship and style, they both offer opportunities for scenic designers to utilize their abilities. More importantly it broadens job opportunities which creates employment solutions. My survey showed that scenic designers looked for these types of opportunities when participants were asked to share how they became involved in allied design work. Rather answering how they got their start, they shared that it was a supplemental income opportunity with pursuing their design careers. One participant stated that this work was always a great source for income while pursuing theater. Another mentioned that it was lucrative work as they were building their theatrical career. Someone also shared this type of work provided a break from theatrical design when they needed a change of pace.

Businesses like so employ artists to provide mock concepts, paint and fabricate scenery, source the material to use in the space. In each of these businesses, I can see how a scenic designer could contribute by drafting the space and the scenic pieces that lend to the model's theme. Many MFA programs even teach props courses for scenic designers where the course develops skills for identifying props needs as well as creating and sourcing props. Thus, there are opportunities to do the same in immersive exhibits like these.

In conclusion, I investigated these allied industries to identify likeness in skills and application among design industries with hopes to bring awareness to alternative or additional job opportunities for designers. I believe there are countless ways in which we can use our toolbox beyond the stage. With this exploration, I hope to sow seeds that foster inspiration to explore avenues for employment.

7. NEW COURSEWORK - EMERGING TRENDS: SCENIC DESIGN BEYOND THE STAGE

The entirety of this work, delivered in research and filtered through passion, converges in this chapter. Up to this point, the aim of this research has been examining the role and skills of scenic designers and investigating if correlations existed between their skills and those of allied design areas. Data and research proved that correlations exist, and allied design examples were provided to offer a scope of how scenic design skills can be applied beyond theatrical usage.

This information was diligently gathered to substantiate my claim in presenting new coursework to the academic study of scenic design. I've designed a special topics course, titled "Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond the Stage" that specifically aims to expand the application of a scenic designer's skill set. While immersive design has been around for some time, it's a newer area of practice for scenic designers seeking allied design work. So, the title encapsulates the course's intent to introduce and examine job opportunities for scenic designers in these immersive design areas.

Critical analysis and inquiry about employment and income in this profession inspired the development of this course. When I began my journey into this industry, I'd intentionally speak with scenic designers to seek wisdom, tips on technique, etc. and received such great advice. However, I was constantly advised to find security in the ranks of academia to secure stability. While academia offers a sense of security, I wanted to embrace that career choice as an option rather than necessity for sustainability. So, while in graduate school, I sought to learn more about this skillset to determine its range of application. From there, I began considering how this could be helpful to others while pursuing this career. Given the contractual nature of this work, considering life's various demands, personal life, family and then occurrences like the pandemic;

I was inspired even more to learn I could make this work. Because I love this work and it's truly rewarding.

Therefore, at its inception, the intent of this course has been to expand job opportunities for those who endeavor to practice in this profession. Studying to know how to produce this kind of work is even more rewarding, when you know where and how you can do. Someday, when I become an instructor, I want to go further than sowing seeds of inspiration that foster creative solutions for the stage. I want to do the same in people lives and I can make that impact in academia with a course like this.

7.1. THE COURSE CONTENT

This course is designed to examine the application of the scenic designers' skillset to theoretical projects in allied design areas. This course will encompass copious in class group discussion to foster an incubation type environment. There is no 'correct' answer when approaching something as subjective as art, therefore the established environment is intended to encourage group think and critically analyze allied design examples. This type of classroom design is best supported by opportunities to work in class. As it's been proven that students produce stronger work when they work amongst their peers. And the in-class aspect offers that along with real time access to the instructor as well as problem solve together as a group of principle investigators. There will be four units in this course. The first unit will introduce the allied design areas that we will examine. The following three units incorporate design projects in these allied design areas. In addition to the project, each unit contains a reading and writing component to strengthen scholastic practice and to encourage research. A reading list is provided and two readings, relating to the content, will be assigned per unit. The other readings will not be required but will be encourage. There is a video list as well, we will watch some of them in class

as they relate to the unit content. Others will not be required but are strongly encouraged. The readings and videos each offer supplemental knowledge of allied design areas such as: job titles, companies who employ people with these skills and behind the scenes processes of these allied design areas. My data set also provided insight on examples of training that scenic designers felt would have prepared them for allied design work. Thus, the course will also incorporate the businesses basics such as taxes, contracts and negotiation and other business aspects critical to scenic designer work. Last, each unit will offer interviews either live or prerecorded with professionals working in these industries. Students will have the opportunity to contribute to the interview by providing questions in advance as well as during the interview when possible. Students will have projects to add to their portfolios from allied design areas. And students will leave with a broadened range of areas in which they can apply their scenic design skills.

7.2. INTEGRATING THE CURRICULUM

Special Topics Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond the Stage

Prerequisites:

Knowledge of one from each category is necessary to advance in this course.

For 2D/3D: Vectorworks/AutoCAD

For rendering and presenting: Procreate/Affinity/Photoshop

Course Description

It is important to maintain a living as an artist working to build a scenic designer career.

Academia is a lovely career option, yet some aren't always ready for that avenue. This course is designed to foster inspiration by presenting allied areas of design beyond the stage where scenic design can be applied. The intent of this course is to unpack your toolbox, take a panoramic view of your tools (skillset) and explore alternate applications of use. For this course, an allied design opportunity is defined as a creative job that categorically exist outside of theater. Together, we will delve into rigorous exploration, research, and application for allied designs. The information and skills obtained from this course are designed for you practice applying your scenic design skills to theoretical allied design projects to add to your design portfolio. You will leave this course with knowledge of how to use your toolbox beyond the stage while growing your scenic design career. To gain the most from this course, you should come prepared to:

Course Objectives:

- Explore design software use to create for allied design areas
- Participate in scheduled interviews with allied design professionals
- Make discoveries (may feel like mistakes) and dialogue together for solutions
- Research and produce writings
- Apply knowledge to theoretical design projects

In an effort to make the most of this course, I'd like to receive your input on any additional things you're interested in exploring in this course. While time is limited, I will structure the course as best I can to include your interest. All feedback will be considered for the first two weeks of the course. This course will be offered in a design lab space with computer access; however, you may bring you own laptop device as well. Please communicate any needs for technological assistance the first week of class, I'll do my best to allocate accommodations for you. After the first two weeks, the content for the course will be finalized to ensure adequate time to explore and produce. This course consists of four units. The course breakdown is as follows below.

Course Snapshot

Unit 1

Introduction to the following allied design areas: Display Arts and Installation, Immersive Exhibit Design, Event Design, Design for Editorial. From each, we will investigate how to approach designing in these areas. We will examine examples from each of these areas and have open discussions to identify how scenic design skills can be applied to execute work in that area. You will be expected to keep up with the readings and other material as it is vital to the work you'll produce further along.

Unit 2

Event Design or Design for Editorial. We will discuss examples in class. You get to create an event of set design for an advertising photo shoot or commercial. You will conduct research on whichever you choose, having identified elements of scenic design utilized in that allied area.

- The guest speaker or interview for the unit will be:
- Readings or videos for this unit include ad art design reading, event design readings.
Salary and job titles in these industries.

For the final presentation: drafting's, renderings, a digital or physical model
In 250 words description of elements of scenic design identified to execute design.
Extra credit: Present a job posting for each of these area's

Unit 3

Immersive Exhibit Design- We will discuss examples in class. You will create an immersive exhibit where you can create a concept, or you can enhance the concept of an existing one (must be approved by instructor). You will conduct research and be prepared to identify and share elements of scenic design that are utilized in this allied area.

- The guest speaker or interview for the unit will be:
- Readings or videos for this unit include ad art design reading, event design readings.
Salary and job titles in these industries.

For the final presentation: drafting's, renderings, a digital or physical model.
In 250 words description of elements of scenic design identified to execute design.
Extra credit: Present a job posting for each of these area's

Unit 4

Window Display Design or Pop-Up Shop- We will discuss examples in class. You will get to choose one of the two. You will develop a design for an actual existing brand based on a prior marketing campaign of theirs or you can make up your own marketing campaign to work from.

You will conduct research, be prepared to identify, and share elements of scenic design that are utilized in this allied area.

- The guest speaker or interview for the unit will be:
- Readings or videos for this unit include ad art design reading, event design readings. Salary and job titles in these industries.

For the final presentation: drafting's, renderings, a digital or physical model.
In 250 words description of elements of scenic design identified to execute design.
Extra credit: Present a job posting for each of these area's

Spring: Tuesday/Thursday

Unit -1

Week 1

T- Introduction to the course, review syllabus and discuss course

R- Explore the scenic designers toolbox: technology, theatrical design fundamentals and the allied areas

***Reading: *Page to Stage* pg. 151-166

Week 2-

T- Display Arts and Installation & Immersive Exhibit Design

R- Event Design & Design for Editorial

Unit-2

Week 3-

T- Lecture- Event Design or Design for Editorial-Introduction to project. In class video on process of design for events.

R- Class discussion. Present rough concepts and research identifying your scenic approach for each

-Decide if you're project will be Event Design or Design for Editorial by the end of class

***Reading: *Designing Events Article & Pop-Up Shop link*

Week 4-

T- 3D modeling refresher

R- Lecture- Jobs, job titles and salary. The job search, where to search and how. Present final research and work in class

Week 5-

T-Business Basics I: Accountant guest speaker, financial matters of this work

R- In class video on process of designing for advertising: work in class

***Reading: *Tate article & Immersive Arts Exhibit link*

Week 6-

T- Guest speaker or prerecorded interview & work in class

R- Presentations

Unit-3

Week 7-

T- Immersive Exhibit Design- Introduction to project and we will watch a behind the scenes clip to see the process of this type of design.

R- Lecture and class discussion: work collectively to break down the aspects of *Candytopia*.

Present rough concepts and research identifying your hypothetical scenic approach

***Reading: *Selfie Factories article & The Ice Cream Museum*

Week 8-

T- Business Basics I: Production Manager or Entertainment Attorney guest speaker. Discussing contracts, negotiations, and the fine print. Present final concepts and supporting research. Work in class

R- Lecture on jobs, job titles and salary. Work in class

Week 9-

T- In class video on process of designing for advertising: work in class

R- Work in class

Week 10-

T- Mid-point. One-on-one check in's

R- work in class

Week 11-

T- Spring Break No class

R- Spring Break No class

Week 12-

T- Guest speaker or prerecorded interview: Tips on installing the various designs

R- Presentations

***Reading: *Best Fashion Show Sets*

Unit-4

Week 13-

T- Window Display Design or Pop-Up Shop - Introduction to project and we will watch a behind the scenes clip to see the process of this type of design. Class discussion: Discuss the design components in each allied handout

R- Present rough concepts and research identifying your hypothetical scenic approach for this project

***Reading: *The Art of Window Display & Hermes link*

Week 14-

T- Present concepts final concepts and supporting research. Work in class

R- Lecture on jobs, job titles and salary. Work in class

Week 15-

T- Mid-point. One-on-one check ins. Work in class

R- Work in class

Week 16-

T- Work in class

R- Guest speaker or prerecorded interview

Final Exam- Unit 4 project will be presented during the final exam period. See the Final Exam schedule for our institution

Grading

Unit 2 Project	100 pts
Unit 3 Project	100 pts
Unit 4 Project	100 pts
Readings	100 pts
Class Participation	100 pts
Extra Credit	15 pts
<hr/>	
Total: 515 pts	

Course Rubric

Rubric for Unit Projects

	5	10	15	20
Research: Preliminary research images, rough sketch of concept, scenic design correlation	Idea presented but lacks clarity. Concept needs to be flushed out more. Obtain stronger research images that communicate concept of interest.	Idea presented and provides a general understanding of concept. The direction is broad and needs to be narrowed.	Idea is mostly clear, the direction of the concept is mostly clear. Images provide a good understanding of the approach for this design.	Idea is very clear, the direction of the concept is very clear. Images clearly communicate the inspiration and approach for this design.
Drafting Drafting on final concept	Drafting provided but missing several views, details and general information.	Drafting is sufficient. Provides the overall layout and design concept. Could use more detail and views.	Drafting is clear and provides understanding of details of scenery, overall spatial design is communicated, and scenic elements accounted for.	Drafting is extremely clear and provides understanding of details of scenery, spatial aspects of design is communicated details of design well.
Rendering (1 is required Any others are optional) Color rendering(s) of project	Renderings provided but many elements are missing to consider it complete: Not completely colored, lacks polished finish.	Renderings provided; rendering is partially complete: Needs more attention to details. Concept is provided but needs more clarity.	Renderings provided, coloring mostly completed, moderate attention to detail work but overall concept is discernable.	Renderings provided is completely colored, all details were considered. The concept is clear and ready to pitch.
Color Model: Physical or Digital	Model presented but not complete. Major scenic details are needed to convey concept.	Model is somewhat completed Scenic details were presented, and the general concept is visible.	Model is mostly complete. Scenic elements provide a strong understanding of the concept.	Model is complete. Scenic elements provide a clear understanding of the concept. Ready to pitch.
Writing Component 250-word count	Writing presented but did not meet word count. And lacked sufficient detail to articulate over concept.	Writing presented but did not meet word count. And ideas presented are strong.	Writing mostly complete. Minimum word count met, and ideas presented are strong.	Writing complete with the minimum word count and ideas are clearly articulated.

Total: _____

Reading List

Required:

Ingham, Rosemary. *From Page to Stage: How Theatre Designers Make Connections between Scripts and Images*. Portsmouth, Heinemann.

Introduction: Designing events, events as a design strategy

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297363789_Introduction_Designing_events_events_as_a_design_strategy

Pop-Up Shop Design Tips

<https://www.thestorefront.com/mag/pop-shop-layout-tips-design-unforgettable-experience/>

Tate. "Interactive Art – Art Term | Tate." *Tate*, 2017, www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/interactive-art.

The rise of Immersive Art Exhibits

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-silicon-valley/the-rise-and-rise-of-immersive-art>

Pardes, Arielle. "Selfie Factories: The Rise of the Made-for-Instagram Museum." *Wired*, 2017. Digital file.

Cascone, Sarah. "The Museum of Ice Cream Is Opening a Supersized Permanent New York Flagship, With a Three-Story Slide and a 'Hall of Giant Scoops.'" *Artnet News*, August 2019. Digital file.

Best Fashion Show Sets

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/fashion-show-set-design-chanel-louis-vuitton-marc-jacobs-article>

The Art of Window Displays

<https://mymodernmet.com/the-art-of-window-displays-15/>

Whimsical Dreamscapes for Hermes

<https://www.designboom.com/design/maurizio-galante-tal-lancman-dreamscapes-window-display-hermes-hong-kong-10-24-2019/>

Optional readings:

5 Set Designers Working in Fashion Worth Knowing

<https://elle.education/business/5-set-designers-working-in-fashion-worth-knowing/>

Meet the Spectacular Woman Behind Fashion's Most Spectacular Sets

<https://www.vogue.com/article/production-designer-mary-howard-vogue-interview>

Mesher, Lynne. *Retail Design*. Lausanne, Switzerland, Ava Publishing Sa, 2010. Chapters will be uploaded on class Moodle.

Whitemyer, David. "Say Cheese! 3 Ways Museums Can Compete with Instagrammable Pop-Ups." *American Alliance of Museums: Exhibitions*, January 2019. Digital file.

Video List

Runway Set Design

<https://youtu.be/goR-CsbFjIM>

Vectorworks-Event Design

<https://youtu.be/qj1JTvaXBcI>

Wedding-Event Design

<https://youtu.be/ipw1fQad5sg>

Trade Show Booth Design

<https://youtu.be/Z2dvZRvi-Fg>

Inside Candytopia

https://youtu.be/Q2LZM_-OOe4

Advertising/Editorial Set Design Phexxi Commercial

<https://youtu.be/60AQGhHunr8>

Runway Set Design

<https://youtu.be/yLblbctd5bk>

Design for Advertising

<https://youtu.be/wpUUKYODoNo>

Bergdorf Goodman's Holiday Window

<https://youtu.be/V5UMw7dSF70>

Galleries Lafayette

<https://youtu.be/3TeKbtGqFbM>

Window Display Mock-Up using Digital Rendering software

<https://youtu.be/yWrz7jF0rDQ>

Art Direction for Window Display Design

<https://youtu.be/EQVvwKSgFH4>

Spaeth Designs

<https://youtu.be/L4fPGJxUEIk>

CONCLUSION

My research process revealed wonderful discoveries about designing beyond the stage. Finding the similarities between allied design areas was exciting and informative. And it established a foundation that could possibly develop targeted training in scenic design or other design programs. The greatest discovery from this research was realizing how stories are being told beyond the stage.

The survey respondents also provided compelling intel that presented a wide range of research opportunities. My research's intent closely focused on the various applications of the scenic design skillset. However, my data and reference sources revealed a possibility to more closely examine the demographics of scenic designers who work in allied design areas. It also introduced the topic of finances, more specifically, how much are scenic designers earning in allied design areas in comparison to their theatrical design work.

If I were to expand this research, I'd interview scenic designers working in allied design areas. This would strengthen the research's ability to examine the allied design process more closely and develop detailed comparisons to the theatrical design process. Also, I'd develop multiple sections on the survey to capture data for each allied design area individually. Combining the allied design areas into one data set, as I did for this research, may have created overlap in the research's results.

I'd also explore designing a supplementary course that offers a brief overview of technology used in the allied industries. My survey revealed that many participants self-taught or purchased AutoCAD training along with other 2D/3D visualizing software. The course would include AutoCAD, Sketchup and Twin Motion. Twin Motion is like other design software's in that it offers 3D visuals and virtual walk throughs of designs. What makes this software unique is that it offers lovely finishing details that enhances the visual storytelling experience.

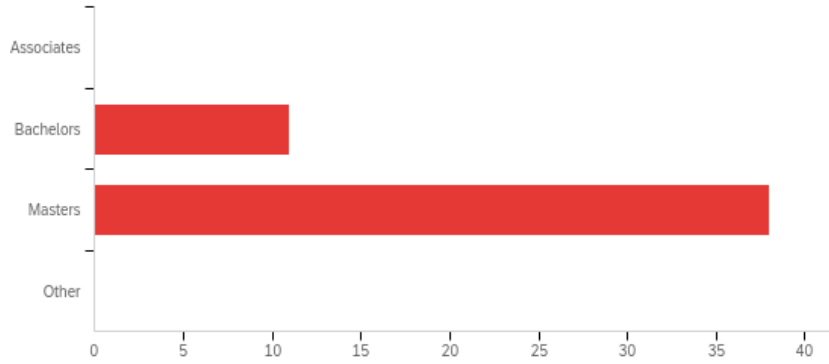
Overall, I hope my research is a catalyst that inspires continued research in the realm of allied design training for scenic designers. I believe these additional trainings would provide more job opportunities for designers to consider. And it would give designers more experiences where they can apply their tools.

APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE & CORRELATING DATA

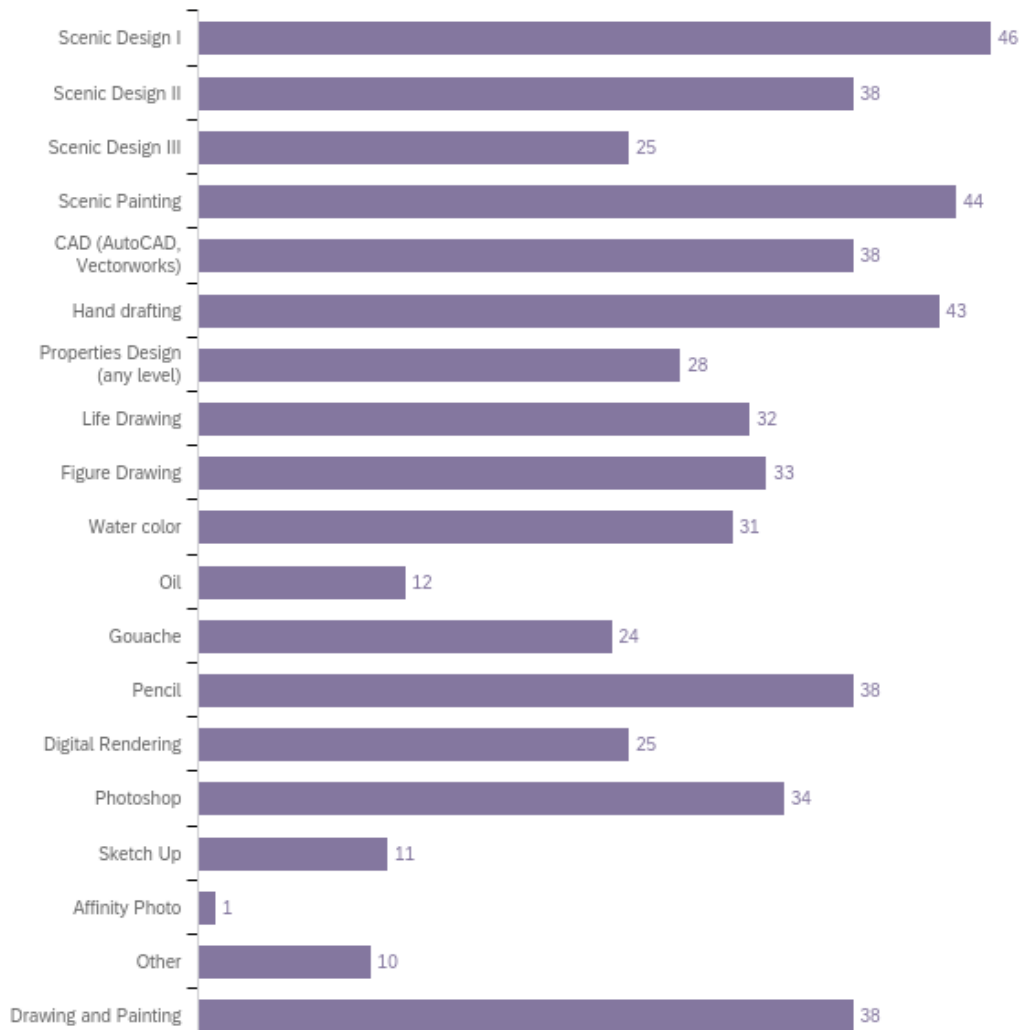
Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond The Stage

Section 1 of survey: Education

1 - Maximum degree level attained:



2 - Of the courses listed below, please select all that you have taken while in academia.

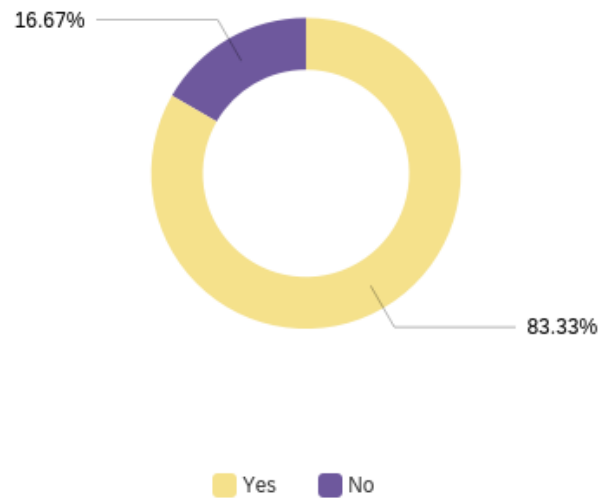


2 - Other

Other - Text
Vectorworks
vectorworks
Vectorworks C4D After Effects
Welding, Construction, Lighting Design I and II,
Renderworks, Unreal Engine, Blender, Maya, Procreate
Vectorworks
AutoCAD
Illustrator
3D Studio Max, Maya

Section 2 of survey: Training

1 a - Are there any skills that you did not learn in academia that you use as a designer? (Y/N)

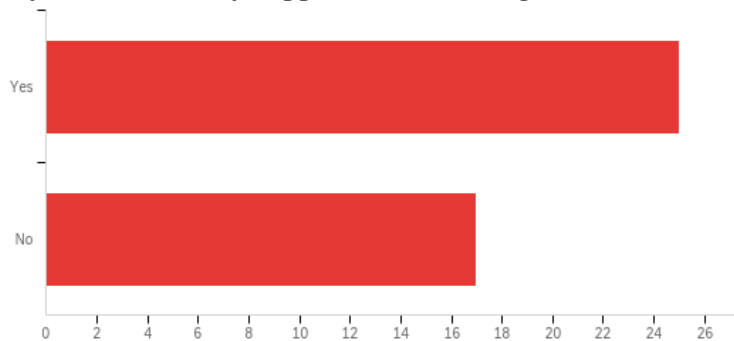


1 b - If you answered yes, please provide a brief description.

If you answered yes, please provide a brief description.
Autocad (I learned vwx), sketch up. Model making - learned by doing - not an actual class. How to negotiate contracts (and basically anything on how to get a career moving and not get taken advantage of.) construction (which I believe every designer Should have a basic understanding to) etc.
pretty much anything that can be done with a computer
I did not study scenic design in academia
How you work with different people and that everything is a negotiation
CAD software was adopted by the industry after I graduated, and I had to learn CAD and digital rendering myself.
Engineering, interior design, organizational and financial skills. All necessary in design work but not formally taught.
Maybe not a specific thing but I did learn more about the things I learned in school while I was on the job.
Photoshop and using editing software in conjunction with Vectorworks/CAD
More 3D modeling and motion graphics
Business skills - understanding that as a freelance artist you are an entrepreneur
Sketchup, Vectorworks, Tax preparation
Other Adobe programs and some google apps that have progressed/ evolved since I graduated.
Budgeting, labor management, prop making, upholstery
Model making, molding and casting, 3D previs.
There's so much each show brings new things to learn. Blood, fx, makeup ,animatronics, various software
Perspective sketching, 3D printing, model building tricks, art history and research.
Knowledge of structures and building, understanding of light though the world
Model making would have been extremely helpful as a stand alone class.
I continue to grow my skills. I broaden my knowledge of traditional art media and certainly digital skills. I continued to learn AutoCAD. I'm learning Vectorworks, Sketchup and Procreate. Academia is just the beginning.
Did not get a lot of model building skills that would help in assisting designers.
I learned how to paint with gouache and create costume and scenic renderings before I entered academia. I learned how to do them from my grandmother who was a costume designer and puppet designer. I also learned scenic painting from working in paint shops before I entered academia. I learned most of my photo editing and graphic design skills from working as a social media and event manager for Barnes and Noble. Programs that I use are Affinity Photo, Affinity Design, Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe InDesign.

My last time in an academic program was 1979 when pursuing a PhD in theatre history/directing. I have been a scenic designer since 1966 when I completed a master's program (to put things into context) I am self taught in CAD beginning in 1986. I have been self-taught in Photoshop and other digital rendering software. I head a department and frequently send students interested in scenic & costume design to the art department for concentrated study in "hand rendering." Hand drafting should be part of a course of study to put CAD into context and when a computer or CAD program is not available. Model building. Designers and technicians develop 3-D visioning skills that directors frequently lack. For directors, a model becomes a necessity.
Sketchup, Designer/Director Collaboration, Freelance Tax Preparation
I graduated pre-digital era. So, all CAD and 3D Modeling skills were learned privately or self-taught.
CAD drawing
Breaking down a budget and knowing how to make your budget go most effectively further.
Management skills (learned through practice- never had a formal class on project management/ production management etc.
Computer aided courses that were offered at the time of my training were not sufficient for practical use. Much more on the job training occurred to get proficient enough.
Resourcefulness. Working with low or no budgets, contract, and freelance business 101.
Most of my 3D rendering skills I learned outside of academia. Understanding how to properly present your designs for themed experiences/interiors is very important in the corporate/artistic world outside of theatre.
Digital Rendering, Motion Graphics, Video Editing, Photography.
business management, tax preparation, logistics, photoshop, SketchUp
I mainly work in Film and TV and there are a lot of skills that I've developed on the job. Some of them are the use of programs like InDesign and other skills are less tangible like effective communication.
my grandmother taught me to sew

2 a - Have you received any supplemental training for skills used in your profession?



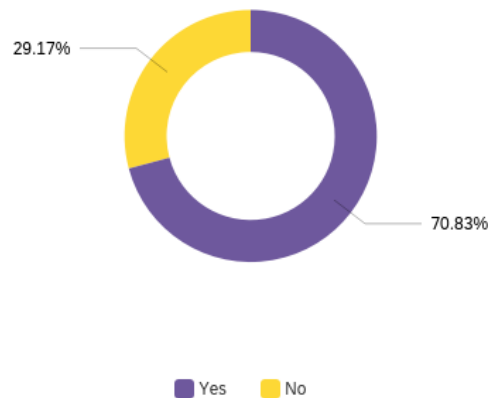
2 b - If you answered yes, please provide a brief description.

If you answered yes, please provide a brief description.
I was apprenticed into technical theatre by a wise old man.
Took digital courses and art classes outside of academia or coursework.
Classes at usitt and setc
Constantly learning
Seminars through VWX.
Working in different shops and for various designers have helped me gain skills and techniques that a class never could. Experience.
Any outside class and online courses to keep developing
Carpentry, welding,
Rigging, automation
I continue to take as many courses and workshops as I can through USITT
I use tutorials from various online sources. I've also taken in-person classes and workshops.
Internship in scenic art, 5 subsequent seasons building skills in scenic art & becoming charge, adobe creative suite courses, interned with 2 designers
I have taken supplemental training for SketchUp. When Delbert L. Hall's book "SketchUp for Scenic Design" came out, I joined a Facebook group of a group of Scenic Designers who all wanted to learn SketchUp or wanted to improve their skills with the program. We used this book as our guide to learn independently but we also taught one another the more familiar we got with the program.
CAD & 3D Modeling training.
Additional CAD training, SketchUp, laser cutting.
Work experience in related fields, working in other departments.

I've taken online training courses for 3D rendering. I've also dabbled a bit in animation with Blender and other software. Bright, eye-catching story boarding is also big for certain clients, so I've been looking into art classes that are specific in world/character building. But that's mostly because I work a lot in the computer-aided and model building world, so I'm trying to brush up on my hand drawing skills.
Programming
OSHA card, playwriting workshops
I've taken classes through my local Union. Vectorworks and Unreal Engine
Vectorworks training, Illustrator training, laser cutting training

Section 3 of survey: Allied Industry (Non-Theatrical) Work

1 - Have you completed design work in allied industries?

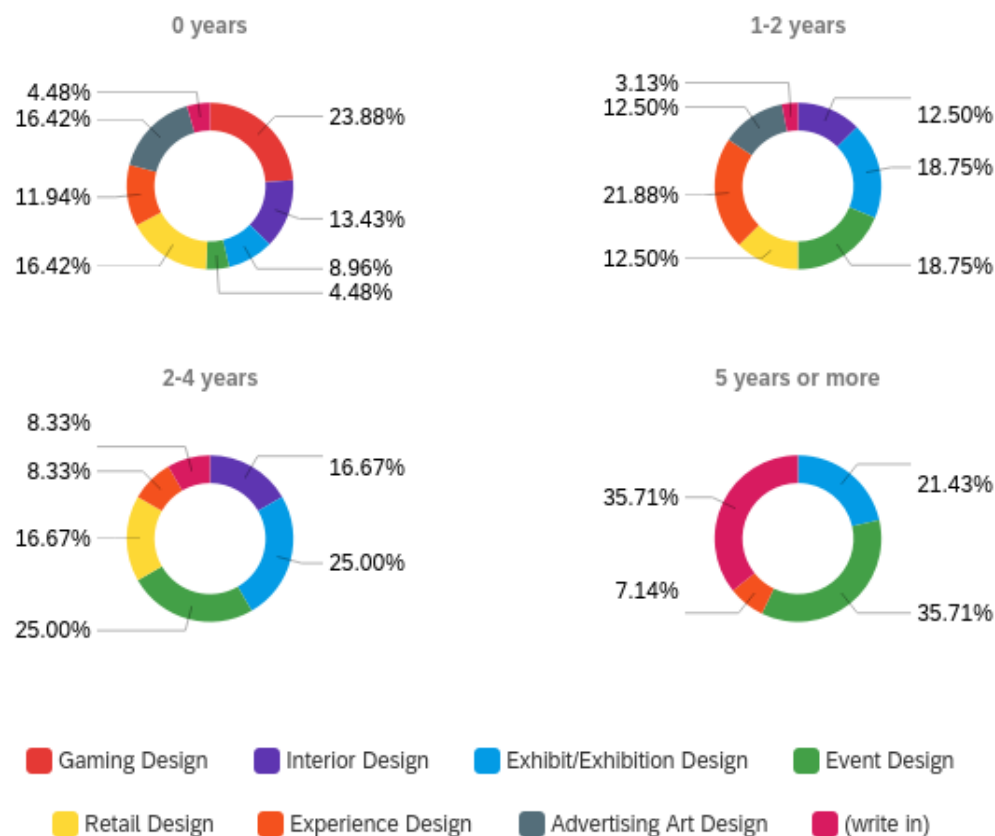


2 - How did you become involved in allied industry field work?

How did you become involved in allied industry field work?
I am not
Freelancing has led me into different design fields.
Networking
Through connections from diverse industry professional.
Looking for design adjacent work
Invited by other people I knew in those industries.
I was working part-time in retail (high-end private jeweler) and was approached to create some display window design work.
I've designed corporate events. I took a job in that industry for a few years for stability.
Working at the Dickies headquarters in Ft. Worth. I would do the window, office, and tradeshow displays.
I started out as a bookseller for Barnes and Noble and I won a competition that the company made for each of their stores for who could sell the most easter baskets. In order to do this competition, I had to create advertisements to promote a sale and I got the most

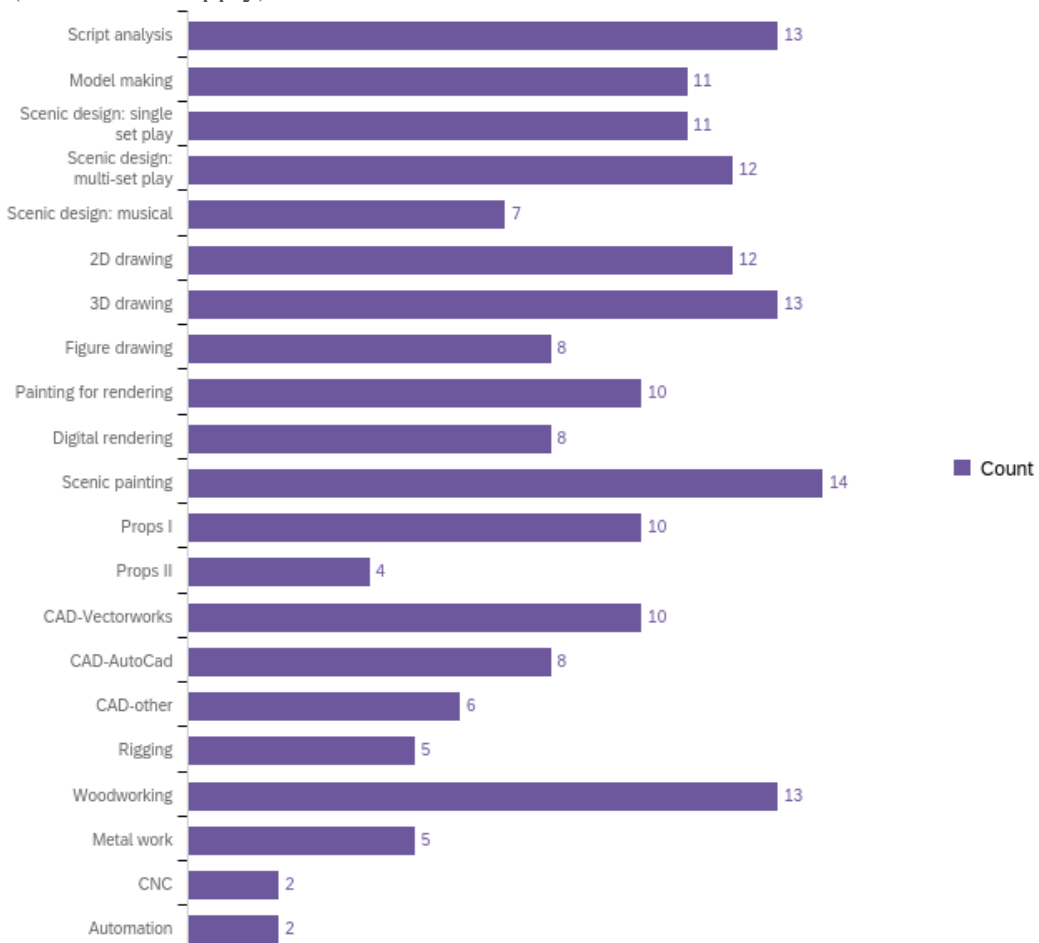
sales. The company reached out to me after that and hired me to do promotions for social media and events for them. I also designed ads for them as well.
By invitation
Solely from a recommendation I was brought on to do FOH and installation designs for a commercial national immersive entertainment experience.
Overbite work when I just started out.
Answered advertised listing.
Job app sites
There are only so many theatres in an area, and if you're moving around a lot, it can take some time to break into those scenes. Working in industry related fields has always been a great way to bring in the bucks while I pursue theatre.
Word of mouth
word of mouth
My graduate degree is in Film and TV so I work primarily in that field but I've also worked in Theme Park and Entertainment Design. I interviewed for a Theme Park design company and they hired me. I think the skills needed for all of these design careers are very similar so they translate well.

3 - Please select from the table below, the amount of time that best describes your design experience in the following allied fields.

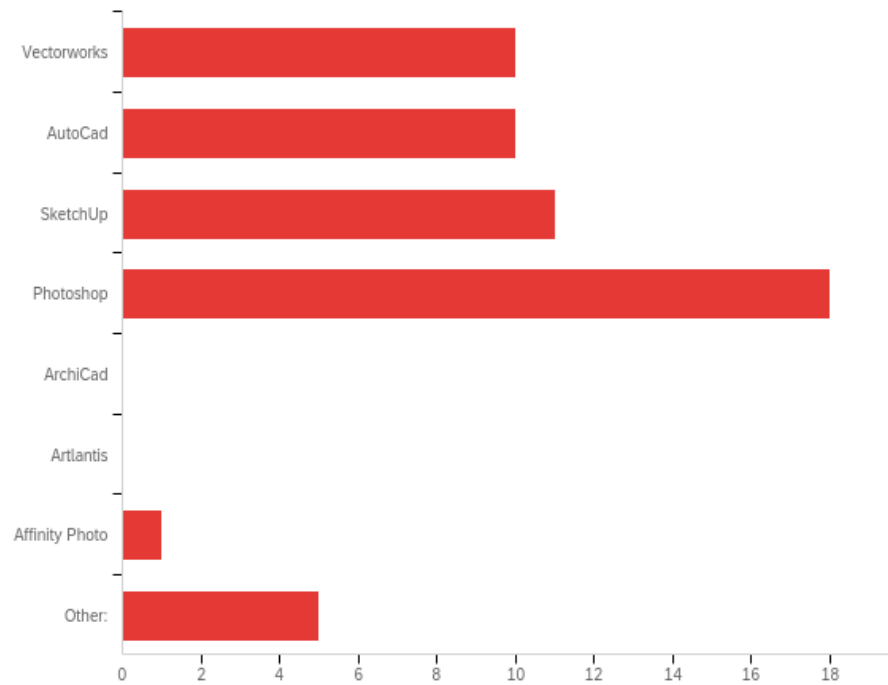


(write in) - Text
installation art
Restaurant design
Parade floats
Installations
Film, Haunted Houses
Film and TV
Event planning, venue management

4 - What courses in academia do you believe prepared to work in fields other than theater design? (select all the apply)



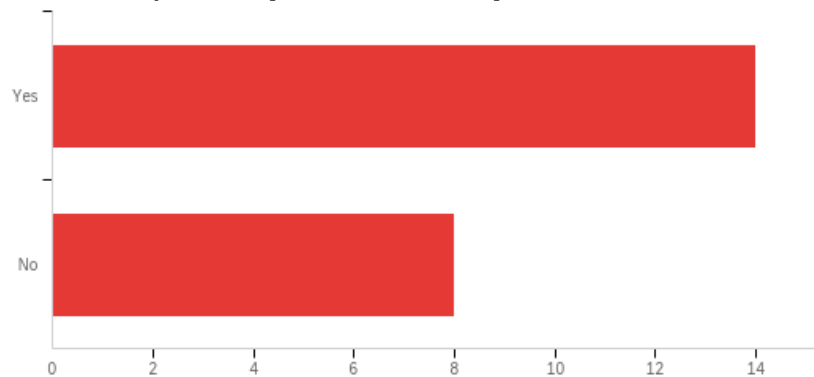
5 - Please select from the list below, any of the software that you've used in your allied field work.



5 - Other:

Other: - Text
Adobe Spark, Premiere Pro, Lightroom
Rhino
Unreal Engine, Blender, Procreate, Illustrator, After Effects, Adobe Animate
Blender, Illustrator, Krita, Procreate, Revit, Maya, Inventor
After Effects, Premiere Pro

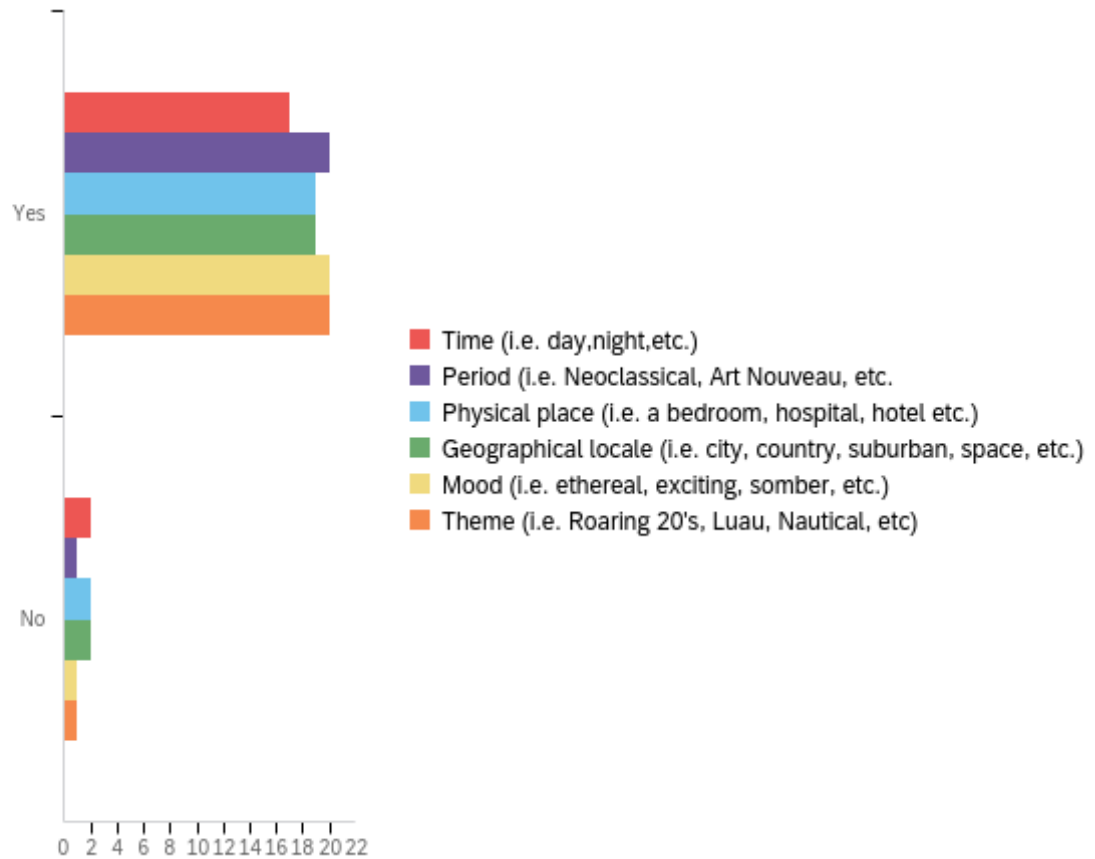
6 - Did you learn to operate any of the software you selected above outside of academia?



7 - What additional skills or training that were not available in your academic career would have better prepared you for work in allied fields?

What additional skills or training that were not available in your academic career would have better prepared you for work in allied fields?
Note sure
How to fill out tax forms. Ha! How to work with clients and directors with persuasive language. How to sell my product more. The business aspects were not taught but learned through experience.
More unrealized projects about non-theatre work.
learning how to approach companies for work in those fields.
I was actually over prepared.
getting more support
More intensive drafting courses, better networking skills and how to find work in the industry and allied fields.
The business of advertising and sales versus the design aspect of advertising. I got design skills from academia but I had to learn the business aspect on the job.
Accounting
Personal Finance, Contract Negotiation, Business, Labor Equity and Laws
3D drawing and rendering
Leadership and management training
I went to a school where we only learned the basics in CAD and rendering tools, so I had a lot of self teaching once I got out of school. Granted, I currently only have a bachelors degree so that may also be the reason.
3D modeling
production or project management

8 - Please select from the following below, any elements of script analysis that you've utilized to execute design work in an allied industry project?



#	Question	Yes		No		Total
1	Time (i.e. day,night,etc.)	89.47%	17	10.53%	2	19
2	Period (i.e. Neoclassical, Art Nouveau, etc.	95.24%	20	4.76%	1	21
3	Physical place (i.e. a bedroom, hospital, hotel etc.)	90.48%	19	9.52%	2	21
4	Geographical locale (i.e. city, country, suburban, space, etc.)	90.48%	19	9.52%	2	21
5	Mood (i.e. ethereal, exciting, somber, etc.)	95.24%	20	4.76%	1	21
6	Theme (i.e. Roaring 20's, Luau, Nautical, etc)	95.24%	20	4.76%	1	21

9 - How does the design process for allied industries differ from the design process in the theater industry?

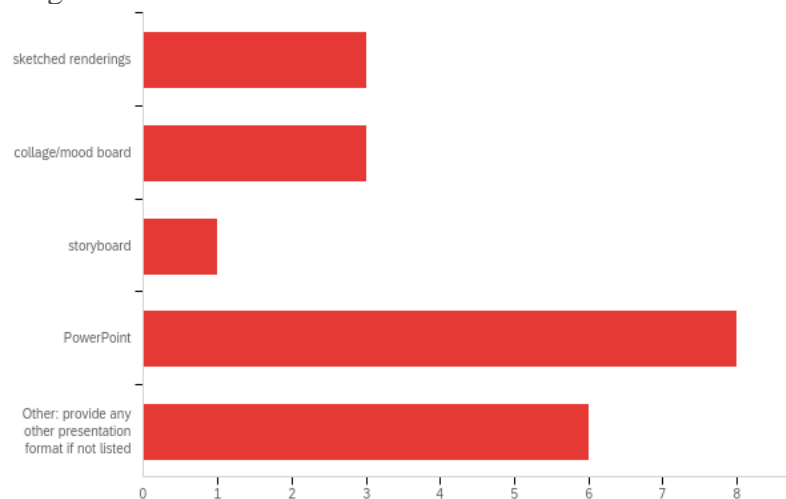
How does the design process for allied industries differ from the design process in the theater industry?
Not sure
The language one must use with the client is different. How to speak to non-theatrical folk.
Audience, viewer's time spent in space and their proximity to it, finished product/detail expectations
Communication hurdles with clients
Design is design
Different timelines for execution. Often designing more permanent structures than theatre.
Budgeting is different. You are also doing something way more specific to a client
It is a different set of expectations with a different audience
It was less exacting and focused more on initial impact and trends. The expectation for well documented design work was significantly less.
Not as much support in executing the set ups.
I think a lot of the design aspects translate well to the other industries but there still is a learning curve in the other industries. I think that the other skills needed can either be done on the job or with a bit more education.
Different management structure, different nomenclature, different timeline
The amount of approvals needed in commercial work is a very different process and a commercial motivation vs a subtle narrative create very different products.
Less about the 'deeper meaning/ connections that may be more subtle, and more about the 'in the moment experience/ immediate interpretation
Client interface
There's a lot more world building that goes into it. You're not just creating a space that people will look at, they're also going to interact with everything. Whether it's a bar, or museum, or event, there's a lot more detail to think about in allied industries.
Allied industries typically have more money with a short timeline, which greatly affects choices and the relationship to the prompt. Additionally, instead of a script there is a product or event to sell so that changes the overall goal of the project.
many times there is no script or story to relate the design to. it is design for designs sake.
Sometimes there's no script to inform your design decisions so it make the design process a bit different.

10 - In steps, describe your research process when producing non-theatrical design work.

In steps, describe your research process when producing non-theatrical design work.
What is the project for What are the artistic requirements What are the physical requirements What is the budget and who Is building the project What is the time line for competition What does it pay
Similar. Date and time/ periods, mood/ theme- research is important to all design.
It's similar. Research images, drawings, renderings as needed.
It is more commercial in communication and presentation. Less liberal expression via research.
Meet with the team. Look at evocative images to determine tone. Gather sketches and informative images.
Pretty much the same
It varied by client but was essentially a shorter version of the same skills.
Analyzing the theme or product for the season that is being displayed. Submitting renderings of the site up. Collecting all the products and creating any additional props or crafts that go along with it. Set up display.
Start with thinking about the target client/audience. Design always with them in mind. Think about what is going to engage with them the most. Then figure out what skills, tools and materials you are going to need to create your design. In my case it was to figure out an ad or an event. Do research and create a design concept. I personally use powerpoint but I have been known to use sketched renderings and storyboards as well. Figure out the technicalities of your concept. What is the schedule, budget, materials that is needed to execute the design concept and adjust your designs from there. I also adjust design concepts according to what design concept pitch with my supervisors is. Then I enter the build/creation phase. Once that is completed, I host the event or submit the ad to be published.
Meeting with client, discussion of budget, online research including digital images
Thinking of scale of space. How does the viewer move through the space. What themes from the show are evocative and recognizable/popular. How can we bring this into 3D? Is it "Instagrammable?", get approval for concept, and then design/render/draft.
-What is the space/ logistics? -What are minimum requirements required from client? - Budget? - Resources/ where can resources be pulled from/ purchased? - What does the intended audience want from the experience/ what does the client want the intended audience to experience/ get from the work? - Design ideas within budget - Share ideas with client - Modify ideas based on client feedback (repeats last 2 steps as requested by client).
Meet with client, site visit, discuss desired environment, budget, and details, research, ideation, feedback from client, iteration, feedback, further iteration if needed, finalize design, create specs, distribute for bid, select fabricator, check in on progress, finalize delivery and site details for day of, be on site for delivery and installation, details, final sign off by client or proxy.
It's the same.

First pay research/contract! Don't work for free and charge your worth! As theatre artists, we often work from a place of love/passion, and that sometimes manifests itself in the form of extra/under paid work (which is not always the case, but it was definitely something I had to check in myself). Allied industries will low ball you if given the chance, so be sure to do your research. Once you're on the payroll, I like to work through the theme or idea of the space/job. The world you need to create is always the biggest thing to think about. Then how people will be interacting with it. Will children be playing on it, is it just for looking at, are they eating in this place, and on and on. Then the nitty gritty like budget, timelines, materials, fabrication, paperwork needs etc.
Usually through books
1) develop terms or ideas for the theme of the project 2) do visual research to flesh out these ideas to create a small pallet of ideas for people to choose from 3) develop the concept people like the most out 4) iterate, iterate, iterate 5) pick what makes the most sense and develop into a full design
I primarily do research online based on theme or mood.
I don't work on non-theatrical design

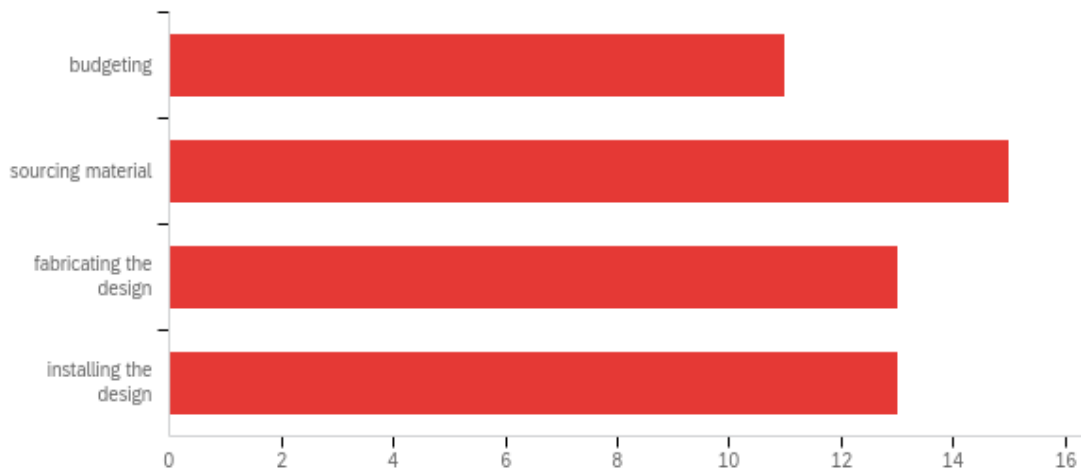
11 - What visual format do you use to present design concepts when producing non-theatrical design work?



11 - Other: provide any other presentation format if not listed

Other: provide any other presentation format if not listed - Text
It varies by project.
All listed above are used
Sometimes model
And also PowerPoints
All of them. Some clients have preferences in how they want design concepts presented to them, others are a bit more loose.
all of the above

12 - When working on allied industry projects, are you responsible for any of the following? If so, select all that apply and provide an example.



12 - budgeting

budgeting - Text
On smaller films, I have been responsible for maintaining my own budget.
Materials labor and time
Smaller jobs like escape rooms, small restaurants, or interior design may require you to manage a budget.

12 - sourcing material

sourcing material - Text
I usually design with materials in mind, and have to obtain the materials myself.
Also on smaller film shoots, departments can be quite small.
Creating art to hang in interior spaces.
Determining local sourcing and effectiveness in realizing project
Problem solving with a shop
Shopping
It depends on the job, but some places may want you to source materials, especially if it's very influential on the design. This could be thing finding food safe laminate, or stylistic plexi you want to see in windows.

12 - fabricating the design

fabricating the design - Text
Working on haunts, I was also involved in the build process. It could be likened to set decoration.

When needed, assembling crew - rental of fabrication space when needed
Commercial sets
Themed experiences like theme parks or museums may require you to create fabrication drawings, or at least provide some influence into the fabrication. Usually the more detailed fabrication drawings gets outsourced, but that's also technically an allied industry too. Fabrication companies like to have a designer on staff to be a liaison between their clients and the shops. So it all depends on what job you get.

12 - installing the design

installing the design - Text
I was the one setting up the displays in the stores and office. At the tradeshow that was sourced out and built with my input.
Securing crew, if necessary - arranging transportation from shop to venue
Overseeing the installation
Freelance work
You may need to be present at the installation. To make sure it looks right or to catch any problems that may come up. You shouldn't have to physically do anything unless you're doing interior design. Then you really have to be hands on.

APPENDIX B. IRB FORMS

1. Study Title: Emerging Trends: Scenic Design Beyond The Stage
2. This research aims to critically investigate the curriculum of a Master of Fine Art in Scenic Design for the purpose of surveying the application of skills and education acquired to design beyond the stage. Data collected will be used to gain knowledge of the work performed in various allied industries along with skills and processes employed by Scenic Designers. The intent of this research is to: 1) Offer a new perspective on career opportunities for those considering a graduate degree in scenic design. 2) Contribute to Scenic Design curriculum by proposing special topics course: Emerging Trends: Interdisciplinary Applications of Scenic Design. This research will support my efforts to promote education and sustainability in design arts.
3. You are eligible to participate if you are aged 18 or older and have scenic design experience.
4. You are ineligible to participate in this study if you are under the age of 18.
5. There are no risks involved in participating in this study.
6. Instructor James L Murphy, 225-892-2219. Kellie Murphy 901-210-5879
7. Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
8. All participants privacy will be protected via LSU ITS Security Team in the event of a data breach. And the device used to capture data is password protected.
9. This study has been approved by the LSU IRB. For questions concerning participant rights, please contact the IRB Chair, Alex Cohen, 578-8692, or irb@lsu.edu."
10. By continuing this survey, you are giving consent to participate in this study.

_____ Yes, I give permission
_____ No, I do not give permission

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VITA

Kellie Murphy, born in Little Rock, Arkansas merged her experience in corporate America and social services with her desire to produce thought-provoking work in theater, film, and television. She began by working school productions and independent projects that allowed her to work in makeup artistry, hairstyling, costume designing, scenic designing, properties as well as stage management. Kellie embraced her interest in scenography and decided to enroll into the Department of Music and Dramatic Arts at Louisiana State University to pursue a graduate degree in Scenic Technology and Design. During her graduate career at Louisiana State University, Kellie served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for several courses. Upon completion of the program, Kellie will have earned a professional scenic design credit for *The Wolves* at Louisiana State University. She anticipates graduating with her Masters degree May 2022 and her graduate certificate in Urban and Community Education December 2022.