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The Scenography of Myth: My Process Designing *The Asylum*

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in
Theater Arts
by
Konstantin Lazarov
June 2013

The Thesis of Konstantin Lazarov
is approved:

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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2013

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ABSTRACT OF: *The Scenography of Myth: My Process Designing The Asylum*

BY: KONSTANTIN LAZAROV

This thesis is a look into my process as a scenic designer for UCSC's 2013 production of *Peer Gynt*. I will track my process from the pre-production stages of the show up until the opening. This tracking will examine both the visual images that inspired me as well as the works of other designers and philosophers whose works built themselves into my design. Once my process has been self-analyzed I will look into the future of my career highlighting my goal of one day becoming both a designer and a director.

Peer Gynt is a Norwegian mythic hero. When I was told I would be a designer for UCSC's production of Henrik Ibsen's epic *Peer Gynt*, I knew that the mythic overtones of his journey and explorations were something I did not wish to conceal. Rather, Peer Gynt (the myth, not the historical figure) was not only to be showcased in my scenery, but also analyzed. Such a task was to be done through a series of distinct steps. The first step was to create a mythic space. This would be done through the act of blending the experiences of the audience with the "biases" of my scenery. Myth is a communal force, it does not designate meaning to anyone person individually. Instead, myth is for all who are willing to listen and engage in dialogue with it. With a mythic space created, the analysis of the myth can take place. Such an analysis would be made possible through an alteration in image by fragmenting the image of the myth's hero (Peer Gynt). This paper is an insight on my process as a scenic designer for the asylum scene in *Peer Gynt*. Specifically, not only will my process be documented, but also the events and scenographers who have served as an inspiration for the crafting of my work will be paid due respect. Ultimately, I will need to follow in Gynt's steps and ask myself about myself to see what kind of theatrical artist I wish to be.

The scenery I design serves two tasks. The first task is that my scenery is to act as a narrator. The scenery must serve the needs of the performance not only as is stated in the script, but also as the spirit of the performance may request. I learned this lesson in a scenic design studio rather quickly. The class had been given an

assignment to design a stage for Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*. Specifically, one of the scenes we needed to portray in our models was the death of Polonius. I had designed a massive curtain that would rotate and reveal a large blood stain when it was rotated, in this way symbolizing the death of Polonius. I was left dumbstruck when Professor Edmunds asked me where the bed was. In my excitement about the death of Polonius I had forgotten the bed in the bedroom scene. This is a grave error for two primary reasons; the first reason is a practical one: the scene takes place in Gertrude's (Hamlet's mother) bedroom. Naturally, a bed should be present for a bedchamber scene. The second error is one of symbol: the bed is the marital bed of Gertrude and Hamlet's father. It was the bed on which Hamlet was conceived and the bed on which Hamlet accuses his mother of dishonoring her marriage. The scene symbolically is about the sullied bed. I focused on the curtain for Polonius because the death (while important) was the main action of the scene and as a result completely overlooked that the reason for Polonius' death was that very bed. The scenery is one of the first things an audience will see when they enter a theater. Because of this the scenery must captivate the audience and get them thinking about the show. Just as a play follows a through line of action which evolves throughout the duration of a performance, so, too, must the scenery evolve throughout a performance. In a performance the scenery should act as a commentary on the things that have happened, are happening, and are about to happen. The image that greets the audience in the beginning of a performance should change by the end of the show. This does not necessarily mean that the scenery should undergo a physical transformation, but rather, a sort of spiritual transformation. As the play has

progressed and the play undergoes its dramatic action, the climax of the production should be matched in a type of climax in scenery.

The second task of my scenery is such: scenery is not just object on stage, it is symbol. For the purposes of this paper a symbol is defined as an object that contains within itself some ideal, belief, or opinion. My scenery is biased; meaning, it negotiates opinions on the nuances of the production. In my time at UCSC as an undergraduate, I did not only commit myself to the theater. I also received a BA in world literature. The education I received in literature trained me to analyze text with the purpose of negotiating meaning. When I read through a script I do not initially read it with a theatrical eye; I dig into it as a literary work searching for metaphors and motifs throughout the work. With an analysis of the play complete, my scenery begins to take shape as a symbol for the analysis I have performed. In this way my scenery holds “opinions” about the nature of the performance. These biases/opinions however are not entirely mine. It is true that my scenic symbols may provide a sway in the observer's thought, but it is the audience who imbues the scenery with meaning. The best critique/discussions I have with people who have seen my work revolves around what they saw in the symbols I have designed. Typically, their interpretation of my work bares little to no resemblance with the analysis I completed. If the observer was able to draw meaning from my work, this indicates we engaged in a sort of metaphysical dialogue. In this dialogue the observers’ experiences blended with my work as a commentary to create meaning for themselves. The concept of blending experiences to create meaning is borrowed from the work of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Ponty was of the opinion that there is no universal world.

What is meant by this is that there is no “the world,” but rather – there is “my world” and “your world.” Each person’s world is crafted from accumulated experience. In this way a world is a relationship of that which a person has knowledge of, i.e. has experienced. When we communicate, what we really attempt is to overlap our worlds and ultimately, share experiences. In this way we can see that art¹, such as my scenic symbols, is a move toward the blending of experience through symbol.

It is on the blending of experiences that a mythic atmosphere could be created for *Peer Gynt*. A myth is a poly-functional organism which is interwoven through many stories. While the stories may be all similar in subject, the events that compose the stories differ, they are dynamic stories which may be altered, erased, replaced, or reinforced. Each story is culturally specific; nevertheless, cultures are able to communicate through the telling of like stories. This is in effect the task of my scenery, the blending of stories. As the myth is crafted from a pool of culturally iconic images, each image is communal and culturally recognizable. What I strove to do with *Gynt* was use the iconic image of the explorer Peer Gynt as the communal image in order to craft a whole new myth. Because my scenery would draw experiences together creating connections for the audience, a mythic atmosphere could be attained. The next step in the process would require creation and implementation of mythic time.

It is possible for time to be fragmented for the purpose of gathering

1 The definition of art I would like to use is the definition provided by theatrical designer/director Edward Gordon Craig. He is of the opinion that art can only be achieved by design. This means that art can not be spontaneous, it must be carefully crafted. It lends itself well to my work because I craft my scenery according to the analysis I have done with the text.

information. For example, let us look at one of the most iconic videos in US history: the Zapruder home video of the JFK assassination. The raw video is twenty-six-point-six seconds long; it contains 468 individual frames. Through the use of fragmentation time is altered. When the video is slowed down, resulting in a frame-by-frame breakdown of the footage, time is altered as a result of the fragmentation. Through a process of fragmentation the original twenty-six-point-six seconds of video become elongated and crafted into a video that is one-minute-and-thirty-six seconds long. By elongating the video more information can be gathered of the events that led to the assassination of President Kennedy. In other words, time is given the appropriate space to travel so that the information it holds can be analyzed. Thus, through the process of fragmentation the assassination becomes immortalized and fragmentation becomes a commentary on both time and events. The images of President Kennedy's assassination become worked into the very iconographic imagery of US history, in other words it become mythic. The Zapruder video was so fractured and refined that it transformed into something other than itself, it became an icon for the very loss of America's innocence. It is the same fragmentation, as was done with the Kennedy footage, with the purpose of gathering information, that I aimed for the asylum in *Peer Gynt*. To me, the myth of Peer Gynt was enhanced further and made even more mythic through the act of fragmentation. By fragmenting the very central character around which the myth revolves the myth of Gynt was to be analyzed more closely, and thus, when he asks himself the existential question "have I been myself?" the answer comes back from the fractured self. By fragmenting the mythic image of Gynt in *The Asylum*, I was hoping that the myth of Peer Gynt, placed in modern day Santa

Cruz, would be analyzed not only by the doctor and inmates on the stage, but also by the prognostic eyes of the audience looking at him [Gynt] frame by frame like an iconic image.

The Image of fragmentation in the Asylum came to me rather suddenly. I was sitting in an artistic meeting with some of the collaborative artists for the DANM (Digital Arts and New Media) portion of *Peer Gynt*. I remember that earlier that week scenographer Robert Wilson had been the subject matter for the graduate seminar. As one of my fellow artists was speaking about her scene (I think it was about *Peer Review*), I found my hand sketching. The rough image was of a rectangle with four horizontal lines running the length of the rectangle. Some areas in the rectangle were blacked out while others were left white. This simple image would become the foundation for an entire design. While sitting in the meeting, I began imagining what it would be like if performers were in this rectangle with only their black silhouettes visible. These silhouettes could be the asylum's inmates. Then I began thinking about what if the four horizontal lines were tracked panels. The inmates would be able to slide the horizontal sections left and right; in effect, this would provide the scene with a man-powered moving backdrop. As the inmates slid the panels, the tempo of insanity would be set. Time in the scene would be controllable through the pace with which the inmates would slide the flats. The inmates body would never be visible as its true self; it would be a shadow of the true self. In other words an image projected from the true self. The inmates would need to use body, shape, and motion to convey their ailments. The voices of King Apis and Huhu would echo through the theater not

only vocally but physically. Their form would need to be amplified so as to pull attention when they spoke. When the time came for the hanging of King Apis the top panel would close and a dummy on a rope would fall from the top of the scaffolding to the bottom. This effect would be a shock to the audience. And when it came time for the pen to slit his neck, the back light could become red or projections could paint the front with streaks of blood. I wanted to see how its simple shape and image could transform through movement and light.

Figure 1A represents the structure closed, a blank white wall. The figure standing in front of the wall represents Peer Gynt. As stated before, my work deals with iconography; when asylum is mentioned, the first thing that comes to my mind is the shade white. White is sterile, in America it is a symbol of purity, and it can be nauseating. For example, let us look at some of the images of *Asylum* that inspired my concept (see Fig 1A, 1B, and 1C) Fig. 1A is from the show *American Horror Story: Asylum*; what appeals to me about the shows promotional image is that it plays with the iconographic weight of white. The image draws parallels to the purity of the nun and the sterility of asylum. The nun has great evil portrayed clearly in her, as the evil pours out of her eyes represented by the contrasting shade of black. Fig. 2B is also a representation of white with a contrast in black. This image however furthers the contrast of black and white not through pigment as in *American Horror Story: Asylum*, but rather through a contrast in light and shadows. I have a limited knowledge of lighting as an art form. However, technically, I have worked quite

intimately with the instruments themselves. For two of my three mandatory TA50² courses I chose to work on the light grid with the light-hang crew. During this time I learned how to hang, cable, and focus the lights for six productions. With regards to the light focus, I was able to learn how the light instrument itself works and what its limitations are. As a result of my time working with lights, my design always has and will continue to strive to give the lighting designer a template to “play” with. For both Svoboda and Wilson light serves as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Both Wilson and Svoboda view light as a matter that is to be architecturally built upon and with. For Robert Wilson “[His] real religion, his God, has always been light; hence his plays about Einstein and Edison, who shared that faith, and, perhaps, his initial interest in the Gertrude Stein title *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. “Without light there is no space”, [Wilson] argues. “Light is the essential element in the theater, because it lets us see and hear. It's what produces color and emotion” (*Robert Wilson from Within*, 49). Similarly Joseph Svoboda writes, “At the time I worked mainly with white, daytime light. I was concerned with its form; I worked with it as if it were a substance, a mass.” (*The Secret of Theatrical Space*, 17). Fig. 1B (my second sketch) is how lighting was to be given a chance to be explored. This image illustrates how I imagined appearance of the silhouettes of the inmates behind the screen. The unit would have been a large, multi-leveled scaffolding hidden behind a large wall of scrim or some other thin white fabric. When the Doctor notifies Peer Gynt that the asylum is his “palace” and the inmates flood the stage, this would be the cue for the

2 TA50 is a course all undergraduate theater students must take. It is a course in which the student must perform a minimum of fifty hours of work for the dept. The work is behind the scenes work such as run-crew for a show or working in the scene shop.

inmates to slide open the flats and a powerful back light would cast their shadows. The actors controlling the flats on tracks would have been responsible for the tempo of the madness. The close quarters and general tightness of the asylum appealed to me the most, as seen in Fig. 2C. This image is an example of a ground plan for an/the asylum. Because of the tightness of the cells and corridors I chose to place the inmates in a similar tight setting. The windows of the sliding wall were to be six feet tall so that the feet of the inmate above would be close to if not almost touching the inmate below.

As previously mentioned, the week in which I created my concept was the week my graduate seminar class had discussed Robert Wilson, specifically his epic opera *Einstein on the Beach*. I was fortunate enough to be able and go see a performance of this landmark opera on the UC Berkeley stage. *Einstein on the Beach* is a collaborative work between Robert Wilson and music composer Philip Glass. The opera itself is about four and a half hours long, it features movement and disjointed speech. The opera is a non-linear show meant to do away the inherent pull linear drama has on an audience. Prior to the show I had been unable to eat anything. I knew I was about to go into a four-and-a-half-hour opera, but time simply had not allowed for me to grab a bite to eat. Something rather strange occurred to me while watching the show and I have been unable to figure out; why was I willing to suffer through over three hours of hunger pains for a show that I knew was intended to do away with the dramatic pull. Most of the scenes were repeated anyways so it is not like I was going to “miss” anything. And still I sat in a trance, my belly was stabbing me, but I

did not allow for myself to get up. I sat and watched as the conglomeration of light, body and sound synthesized into poetry on the UC Berkeley's stage. It was not until close to the beginning of the third act that I finally had to get up and grab something to eat. There was a cafe open throughout the performance where I quickly ordered the cheapest (and what I thought would be the fastest) thing on the menu, an Asian style noodle soup. Impatiently I waited for my food, not because of my hunger but because of the performance I was missing. I stood next to a poor quality TV with sound that could be barely heard over the drone of the people sitting and chatting. When my order finally came I slurped down my soup, which was quite hot, and rushed back into the theater. The entire ordeal maybe took half an hour at most and still, even now, I feel remorse for the time I lost during the show. And still I ask myself why I felt this anger and anxiety for my time departed from the show that was specifically designed to allow for the audience member to simply walk away. The answer to my question lies in the creation and ownership of space. Before the show began there was no global cue to begin, no sound cue or lights dimming. The Orchestra was playing the same long note and the two actors were saying their lines on a loop. Without any prompt from the audience as if a muffle was placed on the audiences mouth the auditorium went silent. The audience decided when to start the show, and in doing so the audience created the theatrical space and timing. It was for this reason that I felt my anxiety. I played a role in the crafting of the space and by walking away I felt as if I was diminishing the space. Up until that point I had believed a space was performative because of the performance when in actuality, it is because of the gaze an audience provides. *Einstein on the Beach* was a great influence on my design for

Peer Gynt. Not only because of the insight on the nature of a performance space, but also because it provided me with some powerful images to work from.

(see Fig. 3A, 3B, 3C, and 3D)

Figure 3A is an example at how Wilson was able to display a spectacular field of depth in a two dimensional image. The image of the building is a painted drop with an opening for the actress above to sit. In effect, this work demonstrates the ability to create a three-dimensional image on a two-dimensional surface in a three-dimensional plane. The simplicity of the image is what generates the powerful impact of every actor's movements. Similarly, movement was to be the impact in my sliding wall design because movement would be the language the inmates would need to speak. Figure 3B, serves as an example of the clean-cut image that can be fabricated from the human body as a silhouette. During this scene the actors in the background were in a constant state of motion as if they were powered by the music itself. Their mechanical movement not only set the tempo of the scene, but also, because they were silhouetted, they were removed as individuals. They soaked into the mechanism of the space ship and became the machinery that powered the ship. Figures 3C and 3D, depict what was, for me, one of the most enchanting moments of Wilson's show. The stage was completely blackened except for the white illuminated rectangle lying on its side. While music played, the rectangle slowly moved from its horizontal position on the floor to the vertical position depicted in 3D. After it was up-righted, it slowly flew up and out of sight. I cannot tell you how long the scene lasts nor do I wish to know. To know the actual time of the piece would ruin the perceived time I

felt while watching that mystical object. Wilson states that “Without time there is no Space” (*Robert Wilson from Within*, 30) and as was stated before, he also makes known that “without light there is no space”. The scene is a perfect combination of time and light in the performative space. My sliding wall design was also to be the marriage of time and light in space through the uncontrollable and unpredictable movements of the mad.

The design for the sliding wall was conceptualized in the Fall quarter, during the show’s pre-production state. Right before the quarter ended and winter break was about to commence, it became apparent that the sliding wall was just not what the scene was calling for. Before I can continue with the reasoning for my decision to forgo the sliding wall, the limitations of the space and directorial image I was working with should be made known. The small black box theater I was working in (The Light Lab) is a space that is forty-seven feet and six inches wide by forty-three feet deep. The scene needed to not only accommodate *The Asylum* but also, the final moments of the performance.³ My director, Dr. Kimberly Jannarone, made it known from the beginning that she wanted the black-box to be in the round seating for the last moments of the show. In addition to this, the last scenes also needed to be performed on a blank black stage; what this meant is that there was to be no paint

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The 2013 production of UCSC's *Peer Gynt* was a collaboration between the DANM students and Theater Arts. Act I took place in the Theater Arts department’s Experimental theater while Act II spanned over the entire DANM department’s DARC (Digital Arts Research Center) building. In this space the audience was free to roam and look at the exhibits on display. For this reason it is important to note that the small black-box was used not only as an installation space but also as the location for the final theatrical moments of the show.

treatment of the floor and there could be no scenery left over. The space itself has little to no storage area making any large scenery impossible to store for the final moments. Also the asylum scene needed to be set up and struck three times every night in between runs of the scene. Additionally the set up could take no more than thirty seconds in between runs; and when it came time to strike *The Asylum* and set up the final moments it could not take more than a few minutes at best. The simplicity of the sliding white wall was that it could be hidden easily, simply close the walls and it is a white structure that can have any projection or light cast on it. In this way It would essentially become a theatrical cyclorama⁴. But, once again it just did not seem to blend well with Dr. Jannarone's image of how the scene needed to go. The Asylum, for this production, is the place the prom kids from the Troll kingdom ultimately end up. Socially innate, the inmates are stuck with the false concept of beauty which they have stitched into themselves through countless hours of plastic surgery. They have never lived much less had one genuine experience. They dwell in the house of the static.⁵

It was I who decided to scrap the sliding wall; I did not fight for it because internally I knew there was something that just did not bode well with the scene as a

4 A cyclorama, or cyc for short, is a large white curtain or wall at the back of a theater. Typically they will be used for projections or other bold lighting effects.

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At this point I would like to make it known that I have listed off all of the limitations and conflict of directorial interest not as an act of complaint, nor do I intend for it to be taken as such. This is simply a documentation of the forces at hand that limited and shaped many if my artistic decisions. As a designer it is not my job to remorse what I do not have but rather to move forward past what is "limiting" me and find ways to celebrate what I do have. These limitations were some of the toughest challenges I have overcome in theater, and the final product I created could not have arisen without them.

whole. So over break I went back home, back to my small desert town of Palm Springs, once again with nothing but a blank stage before me and the void full of ideas waiting to be risen. “The desert is a desert in more than one way. It is also an intellectual desert” these words from my high school literature teacher ring through my ears every time I go back to Palm Springs. While in Palm Springs Peer Gynt (the myth) was always a tickle in the back of my mind and while I walked around town. However, I ended the break without any ideas. I knew that my deadlines were coming up fast. I would need to have something to show for myself come first rehearsal which was only a few days away.

After the break I got back into the design studio and was once again greeted by a blank model box which in turn represented a blank stage. Ideas would come and go but nothing really would work well for me. At one point I had an idea to use PVC pipe as my building material. With this material scenery could be broken down and stored in the limited space. I made some sketches of an office like setting with a PVC table and a tall stool also made out of PVC; everything in this scenery was to be slanted. There was also a PVC oversized desk lamp; this lamp would be a practical.⁶ I liked the skeletal imagery of the scenery but, still, something was not right for the Asylum. The reason being that it looked like a therapists office, and less like a location for the socially mad and spiritually impotent. Desperately looking for some inspiration I began opening cupboards in the studio, going through the trash and the

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In the theater a practical is a light that actually works. It has little practical use on the stage since it typically would not cast enough light.

back room as well. Something was missing from the image and I could not figure it out. I quickly learned in my design career to notice inspiration when it happens even if it is not planned, we typically call these moments “Happy Accidents”. Never have I gone searching to try and form my happy accident. It seemed wrong and yes I was desperate. For an artist like Svoboda he found the inspiration he needed in the furious pace of the last second; he makes it well known that for him “[he] works best when time is critically short, when [he] has to make decisions quickly and definitively. This very risky method depends strictly on feeling and instinct, with thought becoming a spontaneous reflex, as in self defense.” (*The Secret of Theatrical Space*, 16) And so, acting on reflex I found myself tearing through kind of rolling cupboard used to hold some thin rods and other random assortments. In that cupboard I found what I was looking for, a reflection of my self. This was in the shape of a tiny circular mirror belonging to a dentist instrument. I plucked it out of the shelf and started playing with it in the model box. The amazing thing about a model box is the playability of scale. Every $\frac{1}{4}$ inch is equal to one foot In the box the mirror had a three foot diameter, and through careful angling I was able to get the mirror to reflect Peer Gynt at the audience level. I was happy with the direction I was headed but I knew I had not found “it” yet. At first I was planning on having the mirror as a rolling unit that could possibly be pushed around by some of the inmates, in this way insanity would control perspective. But such a decision would mean that there was one more thing that needed to be struck in in a space with no storage. Also ultimately I did not like the image I had created; it was still lacking the impactful image I wanted to overwhelm the audience with. At this point I decided to call it for the day. As I was packing up

my things, a mindless task which could be done on auto pilot, my mind was still musing on the mirror. Then suddenly I got the idea to have the mirror be a hung piece. I quickly went back into the model box and proceeded to try and remove the mirror from the frame in which it was held. This task proved too much for the delicate glass and it cracked, I had my happy accident. I looked back at my self but now in pieces, this was the image I wanted. I played with the now fractured mirror and discovered that with the correct angling I could fracture the image of Peer Gynt. I decided this was what I needed and told myself in the morning I would go to an arts and crafts store to pick up some tiny mirrors.

Returning to the studio after the shopping trip I could not wait to dive back into the model and begin my exploration of fracturing again. Given that the unit would be hung from the pipe grid over actors I did not want an actually cracked mirror for some obvious safety concerns. I discovered that if I used individual squares and had them placed next to each other the seam where the two mirrors butted up against each other would fracture and distort the reflection, Gynt could be stretched out if positioned the right way or he could be torn to pieces if he moved in a certain way. I felt that the image was what I was trying to accomplish. The myth of Gynt would be reflected back to himself, he would see himself for all of the pieces he is and this would compel him to try and make his change. (see Figure 4A) With my model complete I showed the box to Dr. Jannarone. I explained that the white object on which Peer Gynt is lying represents a medical gurney. Gynt would be strapped into this device and forced to look up at himself, in this way the audience would never see

the true Peer Gynt but rather they would see the fractured images of Gynt. The tall red stool is from where the doctor would speak and dictate the scene, intentionally made taller to show a great dibalance. The inmates would be all lined up along the back wall some seated and others standing. Mirrors can be tricky as Svoboda mentions “The greatest problem of a mirror on stage is to be there when it is needed, and disappear once it fulfills its task. “ (*The Secret of Theatrical Space*, 27) this problem was solved by making the rear of the mirror fly up and become parallel to the roof, in this way it would disappear out of sight for the final moments. Dr. Jannarone approved my design and a wave of relief swept over me.

The mirror I unofficially named the “Reverse Lacanian Mirror”. Jaques Lacan was a child psychologist who identified the first time a child looks at a mirror as a crucial point in his/her development he states: “The mirror stage is a phenomenon to which I assign a twofold value. In the first place, it has historical value as it marks a decisive turning point in the mental development of the child. In the second place, it typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image (Lacan, *Some reflections on the Ego*, 1953) The moment the child would look at a mirror a profound drama would happen, the child would see him/herself as a whole. No longer is the child just an arm, a foot, a leg etc because until that moment the child only had his/her perspective to reference. The second key point is that the child would realize him/herself as a being independent of his/her mother. In other words with the realization the child is in fact a whole the child will also understand him/herself as being not a part of the mother. In the Asylum scene Peer realizes the madness he has

put himself in, and the illusion of the “happiness” he had in his “happy” community in the house of the mad begins to crumble he is left once again with himself, however he also faces the question of if he has been himself or not. When he looks into the mirror he is faced with the fractured images of the Gynt of the past, the now, and the future. The shock of his clarity causes Gynt to fall into catatonia and go unconscious but, not before saying: “What should I?/ What am I?/ You who are merciful/ Hold me safe./ Something’s burst./ My mind’s giving way./ You...who or what are you?/ I forget your name,/ But hold me safe,/ Guardian of the mad.” (II, iv, *Peer Gynt*, Teevan)

With the design approved I continued to aid other installation artists with their rooms and various works. Then one day, a few weeks later, I got an email saying that the medical gurney and stool were to be cut because there was not enough space. I was confused by this and was at first angry. Dr. Jannarone and professor Edmunds suggested I go to a rehearsal to see why it is strongly suggested that the scenery be cut. While at the rehearsal I quickly understood what was meant by “not enough space”. There was simply not enough room in the space to support the units because the blocking was different from what I imagined/suggested should/would be done. While Dr. Jannarone envisioned a scene with constant movement of bodies, I imagined a scene as stationary as the stagnant lives everyone has in a small town. We both wanted the goal of portraying a sterile community. Her portrayal was more physical, depicting the aimless movements of people wandering akin to Gatsbyan wasteland characters. I, however, portrayed the stagnancy physically through a stasis

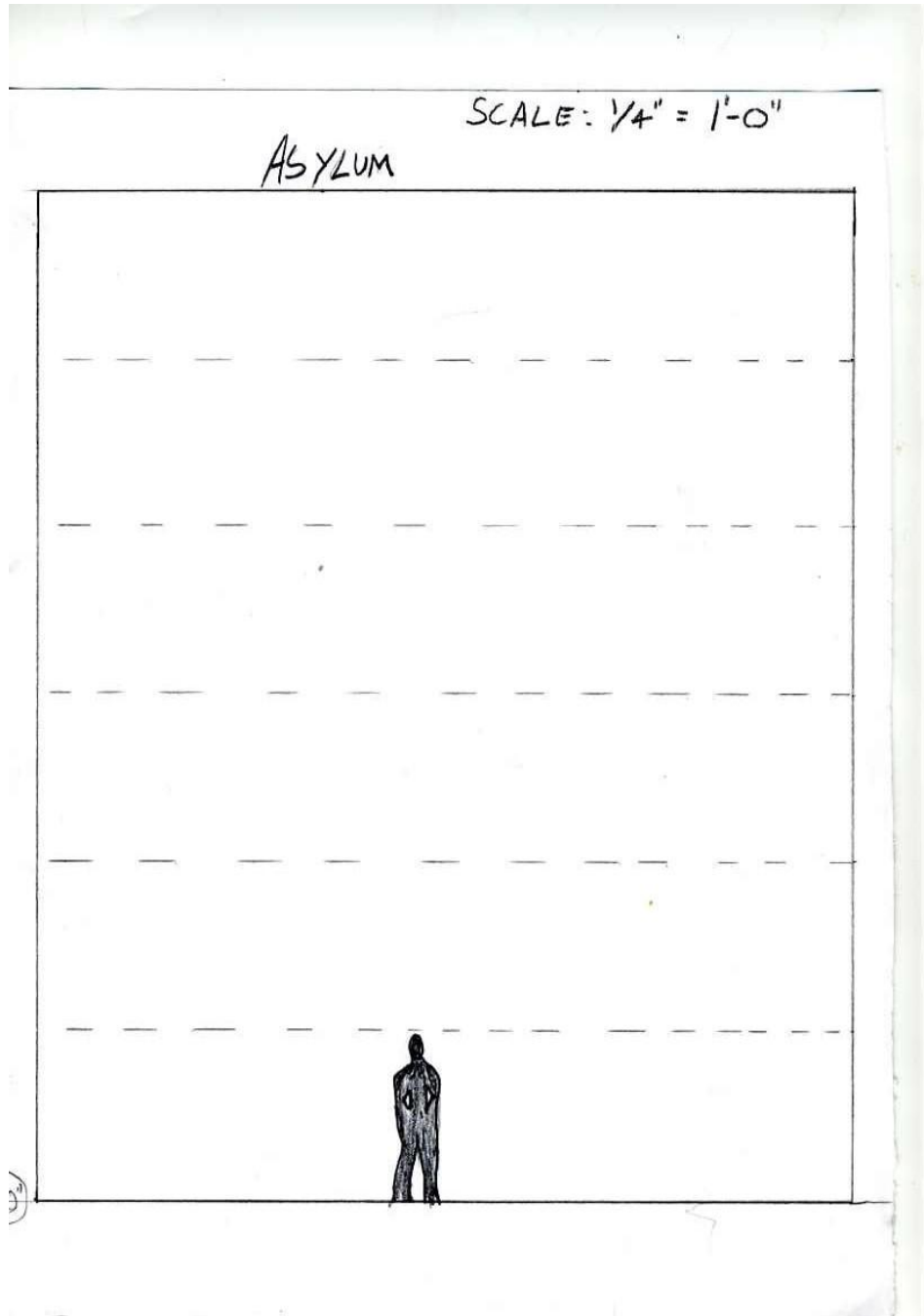
of movement representing a stasis of true thought. The conflict was apparent and I agreed to remove the two other scenic pieces because it was evident that they did not belong. (See Figures 5A and 5B) These are two images from the performance of *The Asylum*. I worry that there was not as much connection with the mirror as I would have liked. This disconnection is a result of a number of causes. As was stated, there was a difference between the director's and my blocking. Also the scene was constrained by the unrelenting passing of time. It took me awhile to design and draw the plates for the mirror. On top of my late submission, the scene shop had quite a great deal of work to accomplish for the show and the other shows on campus. There was also a problem with the shipping which resulted in an exceptionally late delivery of the mirrors. As a result, my mirror was one of the last things to be built. It was not up for the tech rehearsals; it was set three days before the opening of the show. As a result, neither the director nor the performers had a chance to work practically with the topographical view of the performance. This resulted in the mirror simply being an object in space, rather than the great existential tool I wanted it to be. The object did not distract, but I feel that it did not add to the scene in the way I wanted it to. With over three months since the curtain has fallen on *Peer Gynt* I come to an understanding that my greatest regret in the show was not requesting to direct the scene myself.

I have been an actor, a stage manager, a running crew member, a carpenter; I have worked front of house, ran light boards and focused lights. I have directed a show and written a few plays, and theoretically mused and written some

ideas for the theater. I have also been a scenic designer. My journey through the theater has been as spontaneously driven as the art form I celebrate. It has come to that point in my life in which I need to realize what my contribution to the theatrical arts is to be. I have surrounded myself with the theater because that is where my passion lies. This quarter I have not been involved in any shows and after the first two weeks of theatrical inactivity I found myself lethargic. Come the end of the year – and I am depressed. A feeling like something in me is missing. I have surrounded myself with theater so that I could try and ensure in such an unsure field that I can always work for the theater. By taking on so many jobs I have learned the languages of various fields. The theater is a sensational network matrix of many people and skills. A work of theater is a successful blending of the various worlds each department is in charge of. In this way the theater itself is mythic by nature because it works in the realm of images and community. I feel that with my knowledge of many of these fields I have the potential to become a director/designer. I wish to control the scenic image of a stage and have the performers interact with the scenery. If the scenery does not somehow pertain to the show, then it simply sits as an object in space. With a solid team of designers and actors (as well as various other production fields) I could see us creating collaborative powerful works. Perhaps at times would make original works and at other times we would work with already written material. With myself as the instigator/ collaborative head a performance might be stimulated by me, but ultimately it would be myself and my team who have come together in the creation of a performative work of art.

Appendix of Images

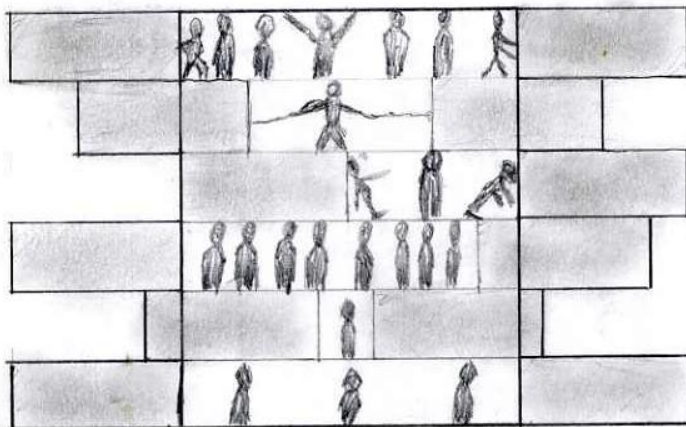
(Fig. 1A)



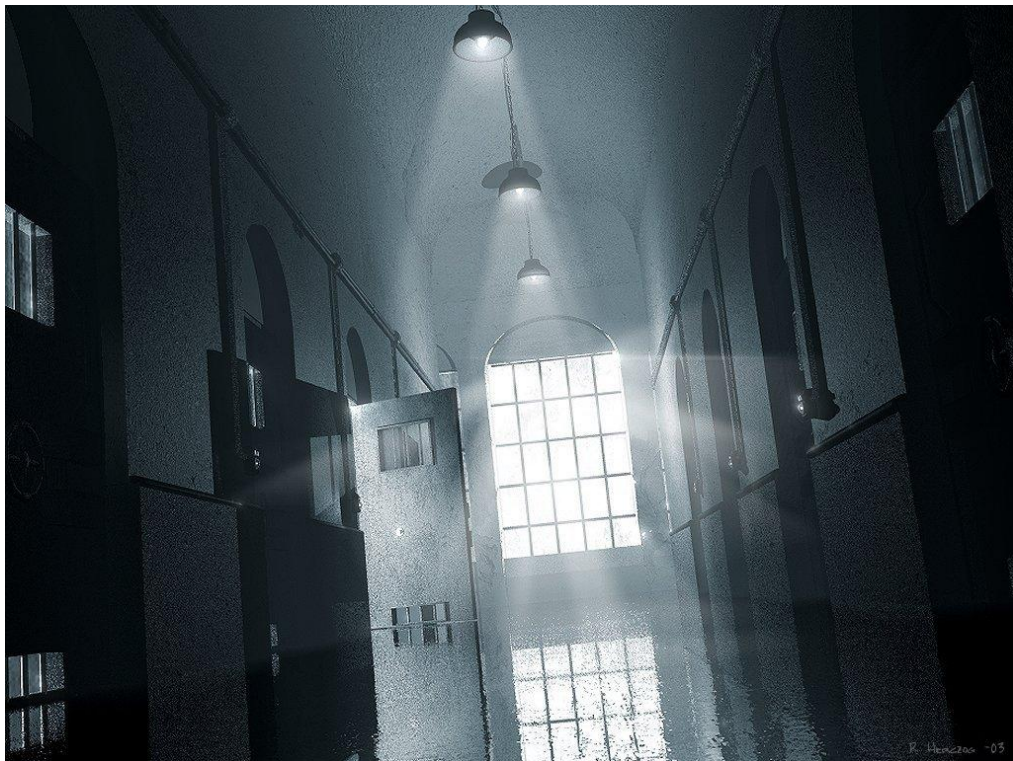
(Fig. 1B)

ASYLUM

SCALE: $\frac{3}{32}'' = 1'-0''$

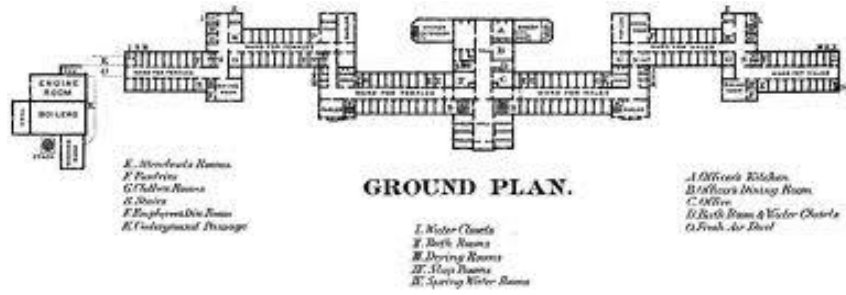


(Fig. 2A)



(Fig. 2B)

(Fig. 2C)



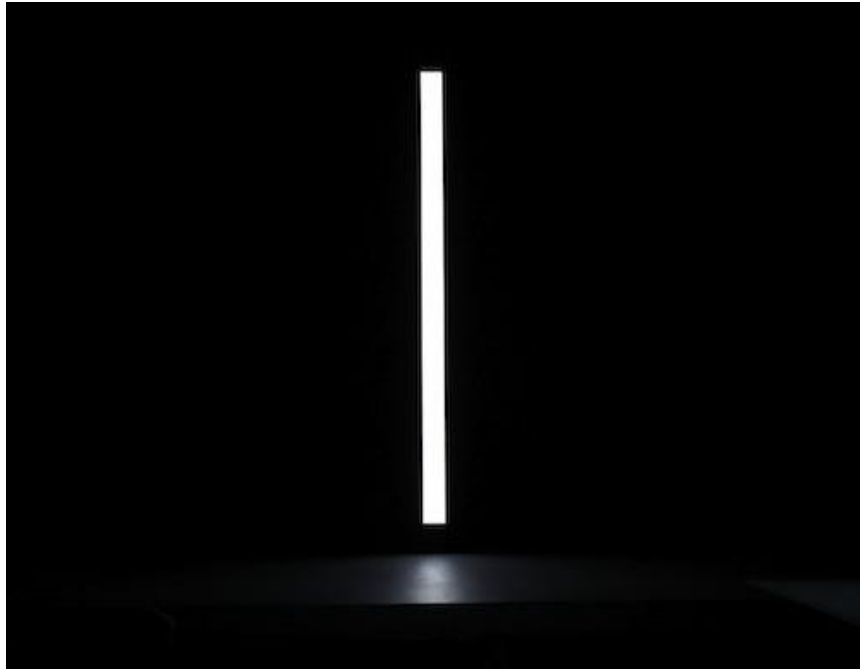
(Fig. 3A)



(Fig. 3B)



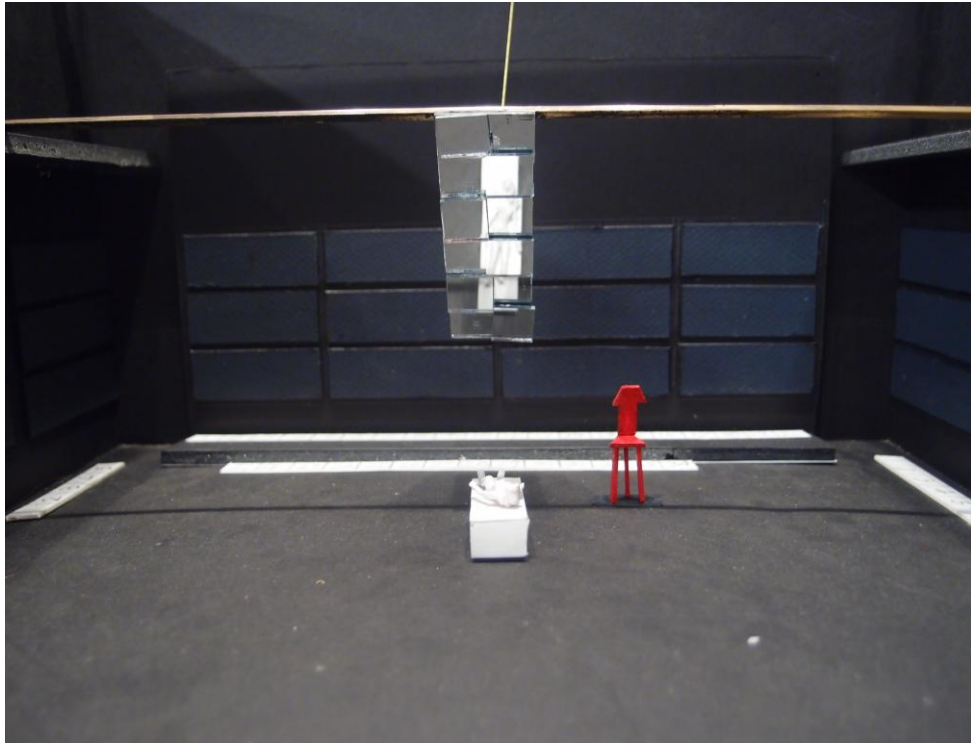
(Fig. 3C)



(Fig. 3D)



(Fig. 4A)



(Fig. 5A)



(Fig. 5B)



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- Furman, Andrew C., and Steven T. Levy. *Influential Papers from the 1950s: Papers from the Decades in International Journal of Psychoanalysis Key Papers Series*. London: Karnac, 2003. Book.
- Teevan, Colin, and Henrik Ibsen. *Peer Gynt*. London: Oberon, 2007. Book.

Images Cited

- Fig. 1A, personal Sketch
- Fig. 1B, personal Sketch
- Fig. 2A, *American Horror Story: Asylum*. N.d.
Television.
- Fig. 2B, Image off of Koreanasylum.tumblr.com, 2013
- Fig. 2C, Image of Harrisburg state hospital ground plan
from: <http://www.oobject.com/insane-asylum-plans/harrisburg-state-hospital/8065/>
- Fig. 3A, "*Einstein on the Beach*" in the revival of the
1976 production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. By ZACHARY
WOOLFE. Published: September 21, 2012
- Fig 3B, *A scene from the latest tour of "Einstein on
the Beach," on a stop in Montpellier, France*. By JOHN ROCKWELL
Published: August 31, 2012
- Fig. 4A, Image of model for The Asylum, Self
- Fig. 5A, Image of *Peer Gynt* Performance, UCSC

Theater Arts, Winter 2013, Dir. Kimberly Jannarone, Des. Konstantin

Lazarov. Image By Gregory Towle

- Fig. 5B, Image of *Peer Gynt* Performance, UCSC

Theater Arts, Winter 2013, Dir. Kimberly Jannarone, Des. Konstantin

Lazarov. Image By Gregory Towle