

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992

A SCENIC DESIGN

A PRODUCTION OF THE SCHOOL OF THEATRE, DANCE, AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND – COLLEGE PARK. CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER'S ROBERT & ARLENE KOGOD THEATER.

Andrew R. Cohen, Master of Fine Arts, 2014

Directed By: Associate Professor, Daniel Conway,
School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance
Studies

The purpose of this thesis is to provide research, supporting paperwork, production photographs, and other materials that document the scenic design process for the production of Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* by the University of Maryland – College Park, School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies.

This thesis contains the following: scenic research images collected to express period, location, and emotional/intellectual/psychological landscapes to the production team; preliminary sketches; photographs of the ¼” & ½” scale models; full drafting plates and paint elevations used to communicate the design to the technical director and paint charge; a unit list naming each scenic element; a props list and research book to detail each hand prop and furniture piece; and lastly archival production photographs to document the completed design.

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992

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A PRODUCTION OF THE SCHOOL OF THEATRE, DANCE, AND
PERFORMANCE STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND –
COLLEGE PARK, CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER'S ROBERT
& ARLENE KOGOD THEATER

By

Andrew Richard Cohen

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
2014

Advisory Committee:
Associate Professor Daniel Conway, Chair
Associate Professor Brian MacDevitt
Visiting Assistant Professor Jared Mezzocchi

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Dedication

To my parents, who have always believed in me and supported my creativity.

To all the MFA designers that I have had the pleasure to think, feel, and learn
with/from.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the talented group of artists, craftsmen, and specialists whose collaboration and passion helped make this production possible.

Creative Team:

Caroline Clay, Director
Alvin Mayes, Movement
Alberto Segarra, Lighting Designer
Robert Croghan, Costume Designer
Lauren Joy, Projection Designer
Kristina Moyer, Sound Designer
Katie Sullivan, Assistant Scenic Designer

Production Staff:

Cary Gillett, Production Coordinator
Mark Rapach, Technical Director
Jon Shimon, Assistant Technical Director
Ann Chismar, Scenic Artist
Tim Jones, Properties Artisan

I also wish to acknowledge the countless hours in advising, training, and encouragement by the faculty and advisors that have shaped my education. Their wisdom, experience, passion, and time has inspired, enriched and guided me to the artist I am today.

Daniel Conway
Misha Kachman
Brian MacDevitt
Helen Huang
Jared Mezzocchi
J.D Madsen
Mitchell Hébert
Aaron Posner

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CONCEPT STATEMENT

Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* is a play documenting the events surrounding the 1992 Rodney King beating and the subsequent riots in Los Angeles. The Rodney King beating was unprecedented in that this was the first time the American public was exposed to police brutality to be nationally televised. This play chronicles, without judging the characters, all the interviewed accounts during these events, regardless of race, class, and gender.

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 was originally written and performed by Anna Deavere Smith as a one woman act play. For the design team, under the direction of Caroline Clay, we explored the aspect of theatricality in reference to Anna Deavere Smith's original production of playing many characters and races. Caroline wanted the actors to play multiple people in one scene; changing characters by body language, speech, and small costume changes a vista. With this in mind, I wanted to strip the Kogod theater walls of their black masking, and not hide the fact that this is a theatrical event.

As the scenic designer, I believed that the set should let the actor breath and allow for easy direct addresses to the audience. The design should reflect the psychological aspect of Los Angeles during the race riots, encapsulating the feelings of destruction, rebellion, chaos, fear, and hatred. This was an explosive time because of heightened racial tensions and socio-economic clashes, not only for L.A, but also for America, and this also needed to be conveyed in the scenic design. After reading this play, I felt a lot of distain toward the Los Angeles Police Department and the practices employed to subdue, and beat Rodney King in 1992. It was apparent that

the root of this whole incident in history, stemmed back to the police, not just in terms of the police's actions towards Rodney King, but also the backlash from society towards the police, both physically and politically.

The set design for *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* was an exercise in bold, sculptural gesture that evokes the psychological landscape of Los Angeles during the riots of 1992. The design captures this painful, scary, tumultuous time by using chaotic lines, burnt textures, and worn colors while exploiting the iconography of a police car.

Chapter 1: THE PRE-PRODUCTION PROCESS

1.1 Research Images

It was important for the director, Caroline Clay, and I to find research images that spanned from historical documentation to emotional responses of the play. Due to the specificity of the play, being set shortly after the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, it was important to capture the feel of that location in that time period. These images informed design decisions based on line, shape, color, texture, form, mood, which will work in tandem to create a scenic idea.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

1.2 Developing the Design

After Caroline responded enthusiastically to the Research Images, the next step in my process was developing the design. This process starts with conceptual sketches (Figures 9 to 11), and then is followed by a ¼” white model to show the dimensional space (Figure 12).

Originally, Caroline was very much into the “signage” of Los Angeles; text based imagery. Knowing that there was a desire for projection, the initial sketches (Figures 9 & 10) focused heavily on the signs and the textures of Los Angeles, as well as surfaces to project on. The designs literally said so much, but it didn’t emotionally say anything about the riots. My advisor, Dan Conway, encouraged me to focus more on the feel of the piece and less on the signs. From there I eliminated signs and graffiti, and celebrated more of the brick, metal, and concrete textures of Los Angeles, while still maintaining an open acting space (Figure 11). During the First design meeting, Caroline expressed interest in a neutral area for characters to testify; a safe place for the character to bare their soul.

I then presented the ¼” scale white model (Figure 12) at the Second design meeting. As a design team, we all agreed that the scenic design was too clean, too polite, and weak in idea. Caroline advised me to “get angry”; to feel the explosiveness of the riots. To re-inspire myself, I went to the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. At this time, the Hirshhorn was holding an exhibit called “the Art of Destruction”. In this art gallery were pictures of broken objects, famous riots, vandalism, violence, and distress. In particular, the exhibit that totally inspired my final design was Raphael Montanez Ortiz’s *Piano Destruction Concert* (Figures 13 &

14); a beautifully smashed and splayed out piano which perfectly dissected the act of violence. I could feel the harsh turmoil emanating from the piano. I began wondering what would represent “the piano” in terms of the world for *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. This whole play revolves around the actions and reactions of the Los Angeles police, and I began finding images of burnt up and tossed over cop cars during riots (figures 16 to 18). This police car is a symbolic representation of the state of distress that L.A was experiencing during the riots.

It was important to me to create a sculpture that captured the essence of Raphael Montanez Ortiz’s *Piano Destruction Concert* and burnt up police cars. *Piano Destruction Concert* in its disheveled beauty also feels much like a dissection. This play takes interviews verbatim conducted by Anna Deavere Smith, and in an essence, anatomizes that piece of history. This burnt up police car sculpture should feel chaotic, explosive, and dissected, as it crashes into the Robert & Arlene Kogod Theater.

Since the design was becoming more sculptural, I decided to make a ½” model for a larger scale. First I started with a color neutral model to show space, shape and directionality (figure 19). After approval from both Dan Conway and Caroline Clay on this design, I continued by adding color and texture. This will be the ½” color model, and the finalized design (figure 20).

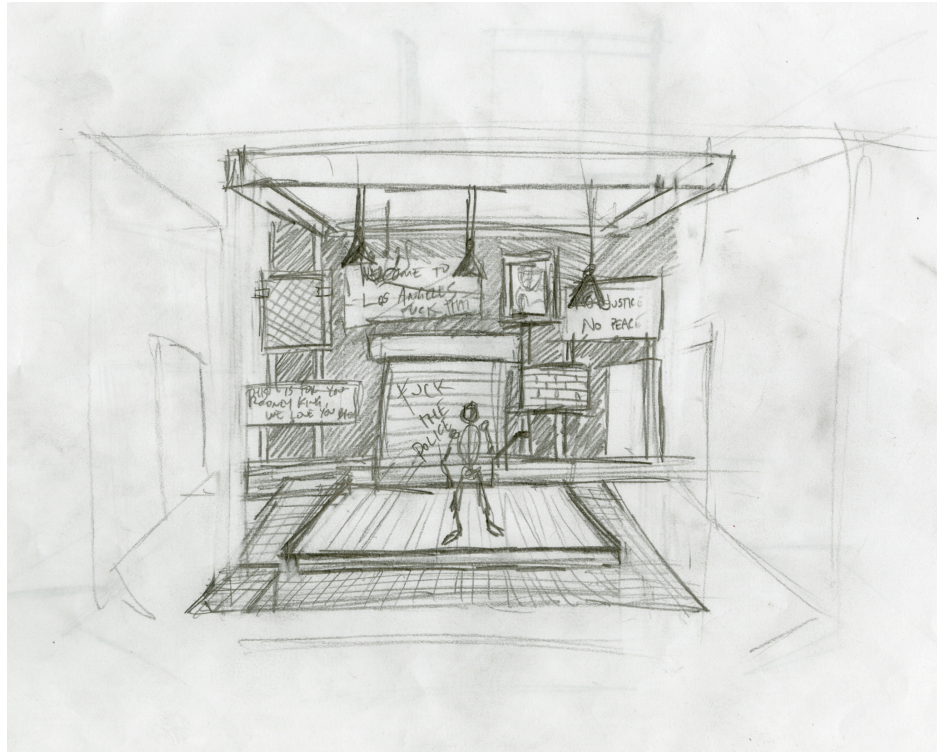


Figure 9

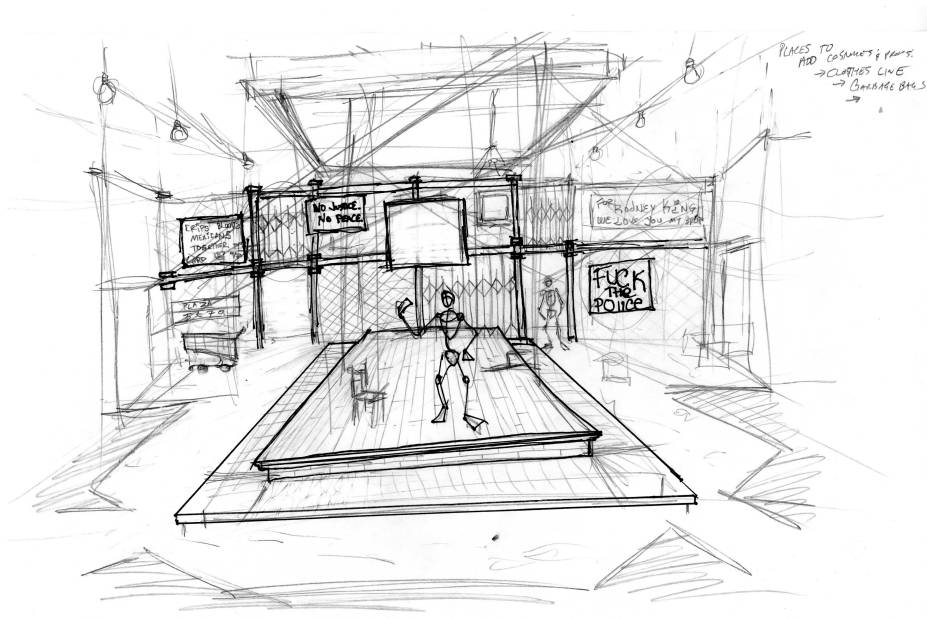


Figure 10

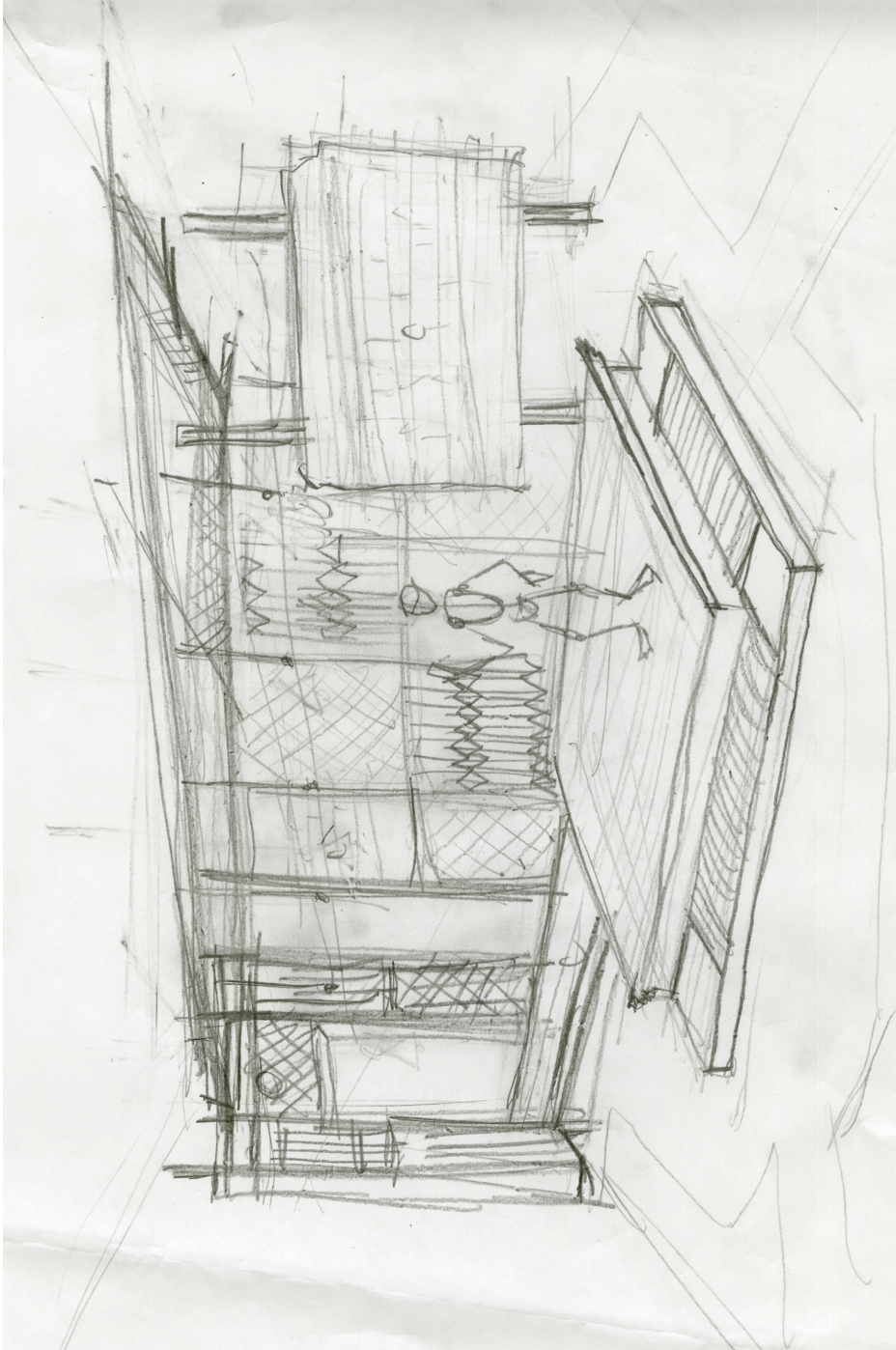


Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

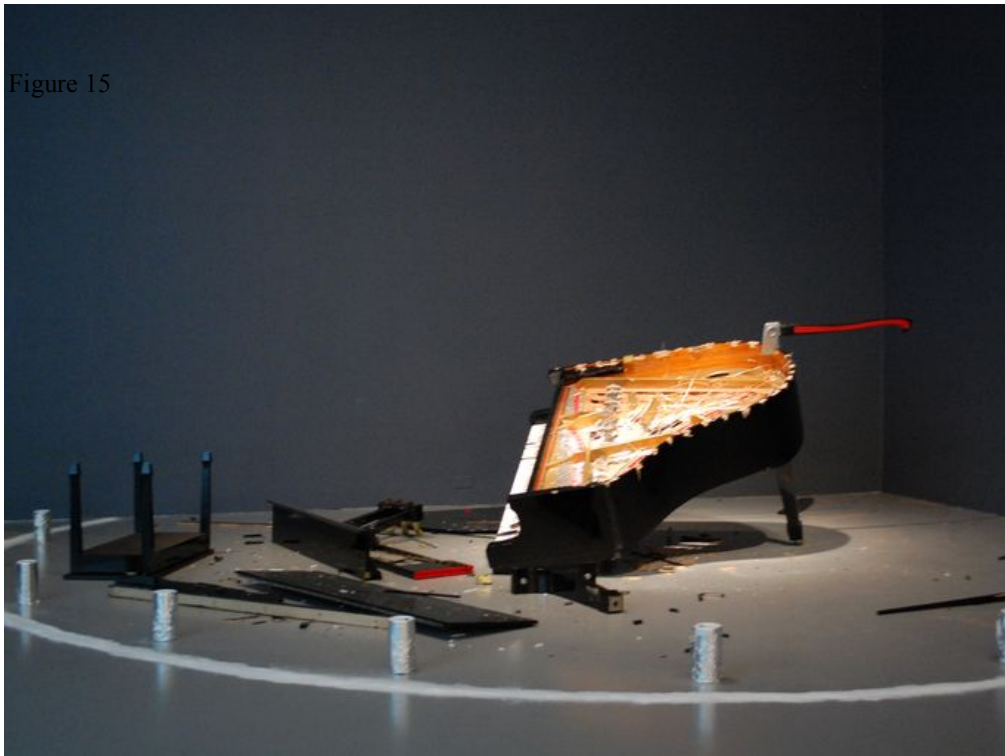


Figure 15

Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

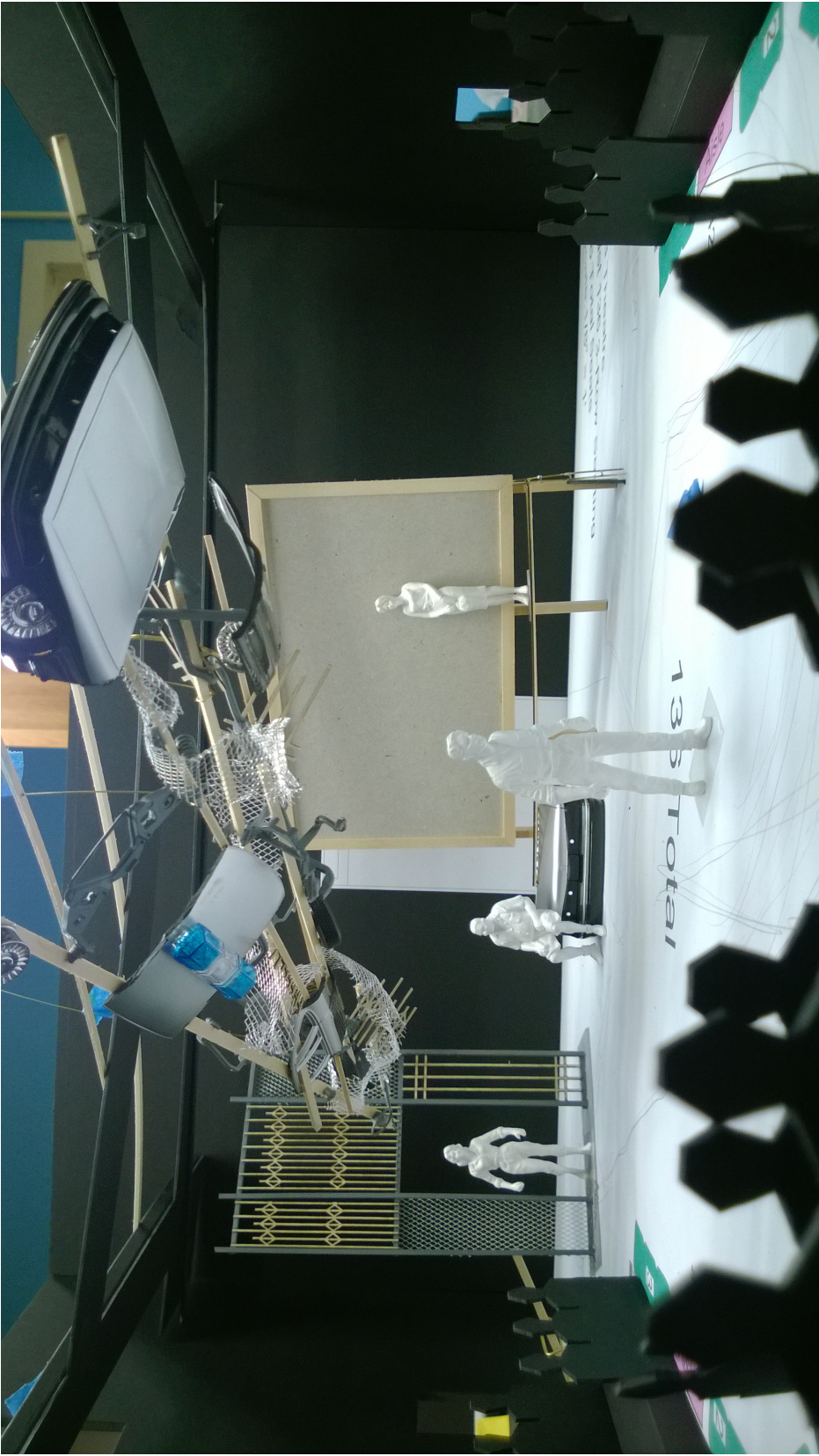


Figure 19




Figure 20

Chapter 2: THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

2.1 The Drafting

During the Third Design Meeting, the director and designers responded positively to the set. The next step was to create a packet of technical drafting, used by the scene shop to build the show. These drafting (Figures 21 to 25) convey dimensions, materials, and placements.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992</p>		CONTENTS	
		1	GROUNDPLAN & SECTIONS
		2	DECK PLAN & ELEVATION
		3	CAR SCULPTURE
		4	FENCE PLACEMENT



DIRECTOR: CAROLINE CLAY
 SCENIC DESIGN: ANDREW R. COHEN
 LIGHTING DESIGN: ALBERTO SEGARRA
 PROJECTION DESIGN: LAUREN JOY
 COSTUME DESIGN: ROBERT CROGHAN

Figure 21

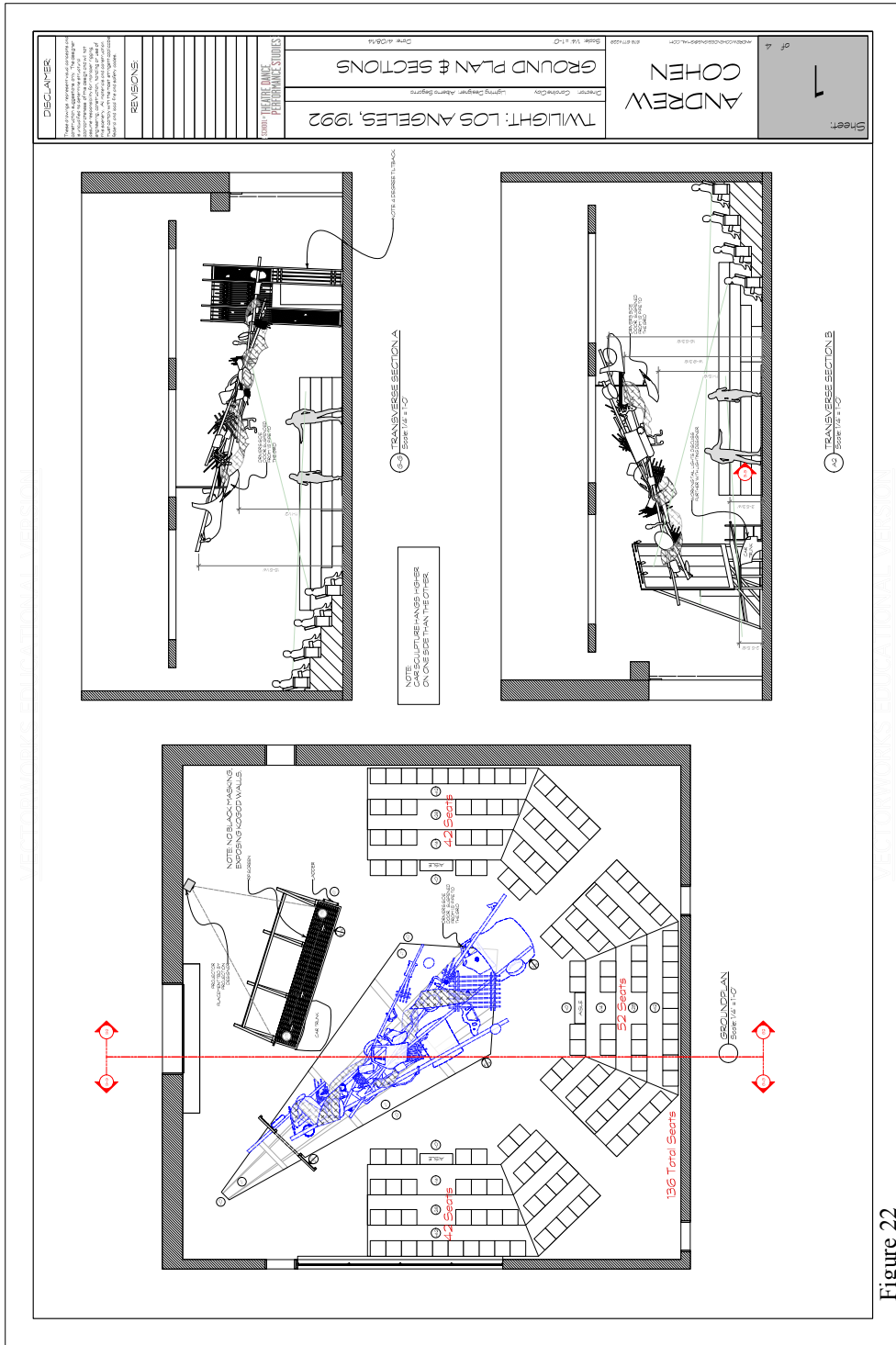


Figure 22

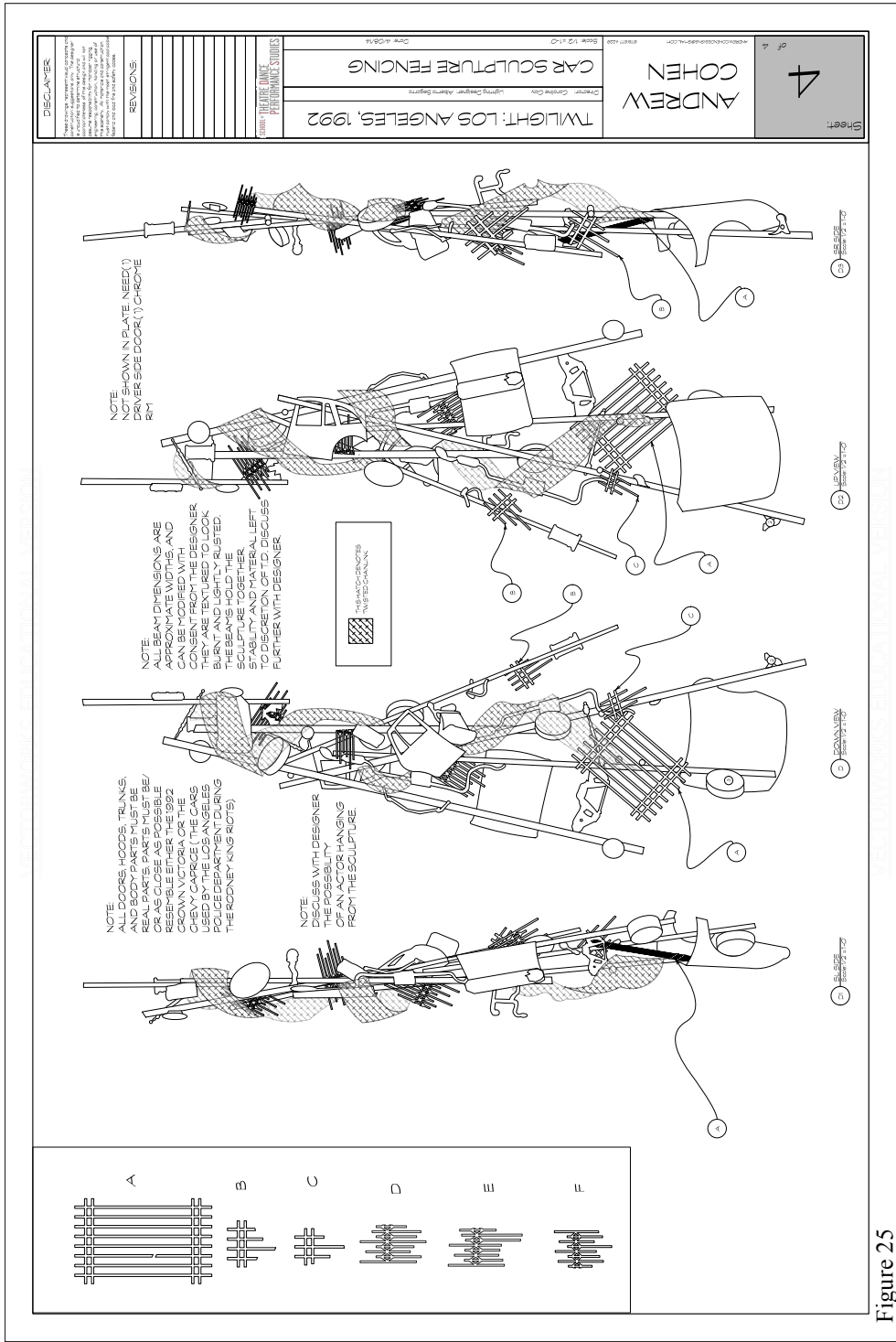


Figure 25

2.2 The Service Piece List

The Service Piece list (Figures 26 & 27) is used to cost out the set. The list categorizes, quantifies, and denotes each piece of scenery. It is used to establish common language between the scenic, paint, and prop shop.

CLARICE SMITH
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER AT MARYLAND
Production Services Piece List

Department: Theatre	Director: Caroline Clay
Show: Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992	Scenic Designer: Andrew R. Cohen
Space: Kogod Theater	Lighting Designer: Alberto Segarra

The piece list function is to provide descriptive information for preferred construction methods, materials, research, and suggested aesthetic designs. This list will accompany the design package for the production.

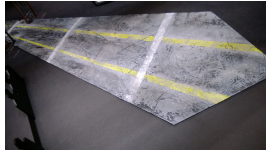


Plate # (of drawings)	Unit (on plate)	Description (movement, weight, location, materials, quantity)	Notes (research, images, websites)
2	Show Deck	Deck is only an (1") off the ground. Torn Homosote Textured with jax sand. Sun beaten street asphalt, painted with yellow and white traffic lines in forced perspective.	
3	Cop Car Sculpture	Exploded cop car, hangs over head show deck. Held together with beams. Auto parts are either found from a junk yard. There are pieces of iron work. Chain link spirals around the sculpture. There is a working police siren light. Compounded texture is painted to look like burn and rust, in some parts actual cop car color is still present and shiny. Supports weight of a climbing actor?	
2	Billboard	16"x10" billboard. RP screen with seams and slight torn paper texture (Specifics to be further discussed with Projection Designer). Billboard has 3 practical lights, and a small ladder to the metal grating. Grating sits on the edge of the trunk. Grating must support weight of actors. Rusted billboard legs.	

Figure 26

CLARICE SMITH
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER AT MARYLAND

Production Services Piece List



N/A	Car Trunk	Trunk should open up to hold props, support the weight of an actor when trunk is closed, and have working taillights. Textured and distressed to look like shiny black paint burnt.	
2	Patchwork Metal fence	Fencing with an opening in the center. Chain link fence and MDF routed LA metal fencing. Backed with black scrim to catch projection. Painted to look rusted in framework, and worn in the actual metalwork.	

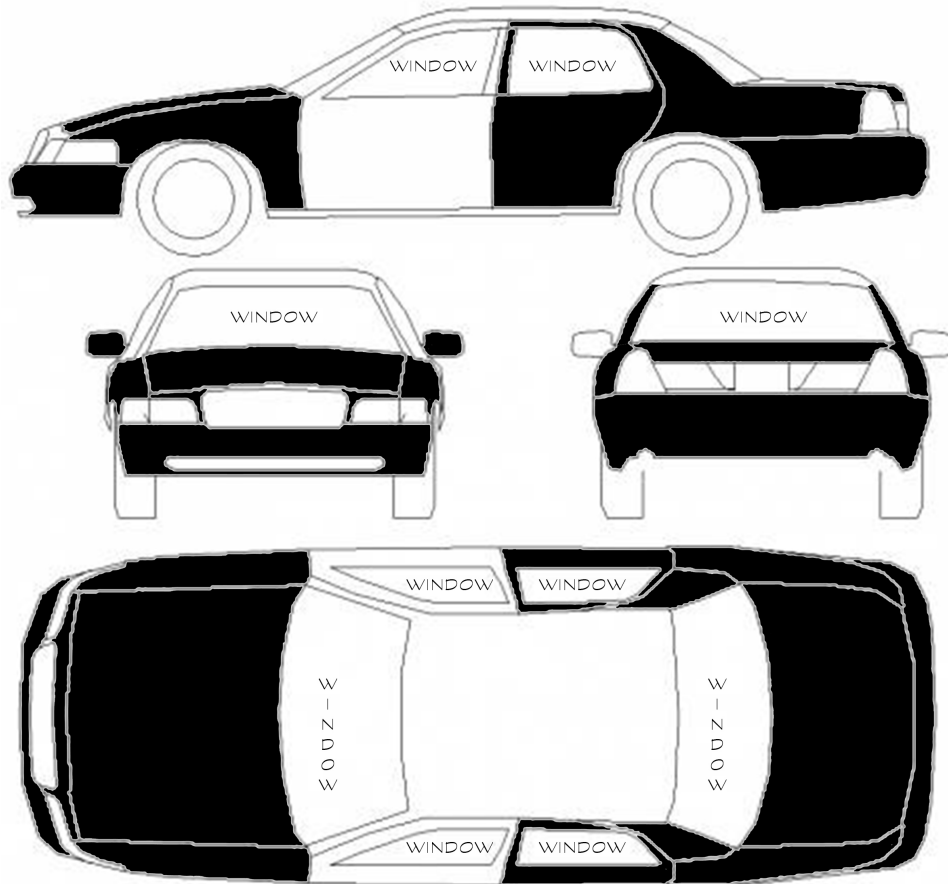
Figure 27

2.3 Painter's Elevations

Painter's Elevations (Figures 28 & 30) convey color, texture, and detail to the scenic paint charge, Ann Chismar. Since we bought a 1997 green Ford Crown Victoria that needed to look like a police car, I also provided elevations for an auto-painter (Figure 29).



Figure 28



TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
 AUTO PAINT COLOR SCHEME
 ANDREW R. COHEN

NOTE:

-DO NOT PAINT LIGHTS, WINDOWS, OR GRILLS.

-FRONT DOOR (PASSENGER/DRIVER), AND CEILING OF CAR PAINTED WHITE

Figure 29

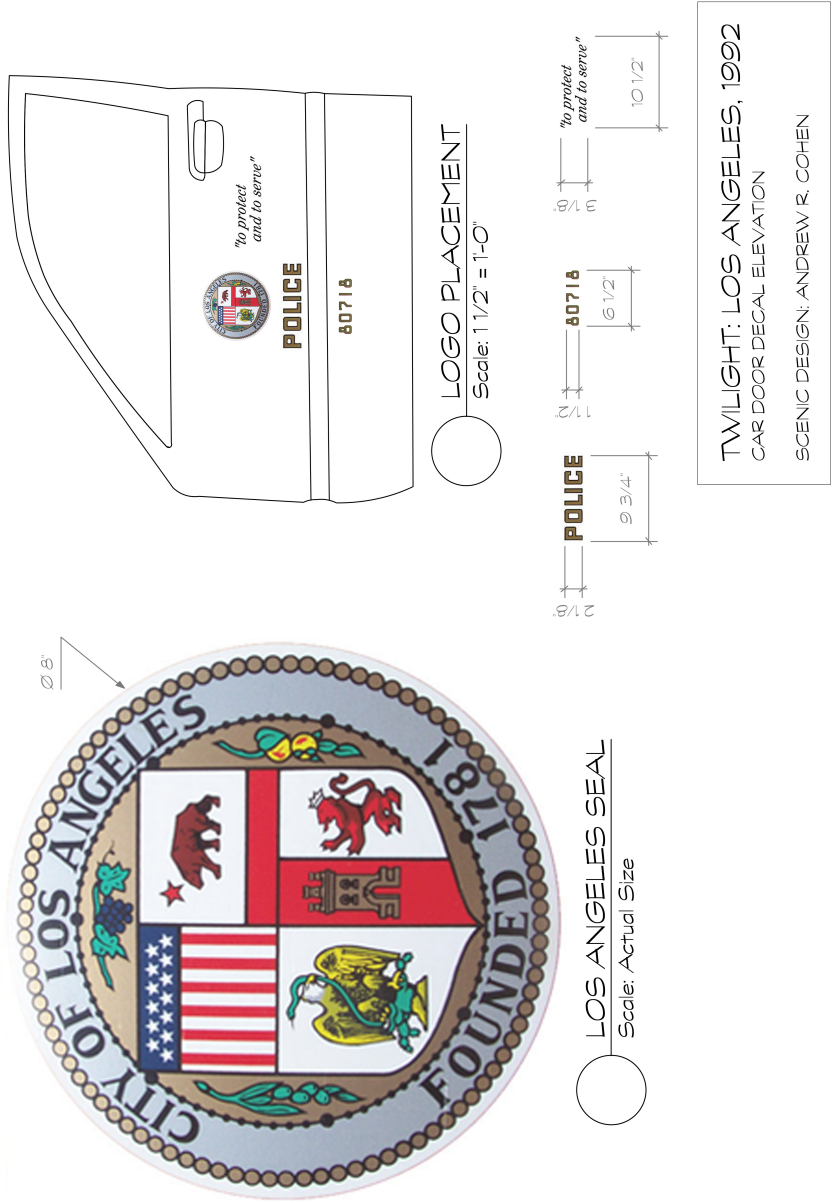


Figure 30

2.4 The Properties List

A Properties List (Figure 31) communicates to the prop master, Timothy Jones, what furniture and hand props are needed for the production. It describes the look, function, and quantity.

Production Services Props List

Department: Theatre			Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992				
Show: Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992			Designer: Andrew R. Cohen				
Space: The Kogod Theatre			Lighting Designer: Alberto Segarra				
Prop #	Prop	Description <small>(location, paint, function)</small>	Qty.	Reh <small>Y/N</small>	Tech <small>Y/N</small>	Perf <small>N</small>	Notes
FURNITURE AND SET DRESSING							
1	Shopping Cart	Older, holds plastic bags full of garbage and hidden costume pieces	1				
2	Car Trunk	Trunk must open to hold props/ Must hold weight of standing/sitting person. Working Tail Lights	1				1992 Crown Vic/Chevy Caprice
3	Table	Black, to match Chairs	1				
4	Chairs	chairs stable enough to withstand abuse.	4				Stock C120
5	rolling cart	AV cart. Holds a live tube television	1				
6	tv	1990's tube television, long extension cord	1				
Hand Props							
7	batons	1 Police Baton, 7 sticks	~8				sticks simulate baton
8	skateboard	1990's skateboard, with vibrant deck art	1				
9	spray cans	empty, for fake graffiti	few				
10	boombox	Late 80's, early 90's. Bass, tweeter, and lights	1				
11	Flash Light	Mag light, black. Incandecent	9				
12	cardboard box	for breakdancing, duct tape seams	1				
13	news camera	over the shoulder news camera. 1990's.	1				Has a practical light in it
CONSUMABLES							

Figure 31

2.5 The Properties Book

The Properties Book (Figures 32 to 38) contains detailed images and descriptions of furniture, hand props, and consumables. It is the visual companion to the Properties List. (Figure 31).

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen
Date: 11/25/13

Car Trunk



2.

Burnt and slightly rusted back end of a 1992 Crown Vic/Chevy Caprice (dependent on make/model used in sculpture). Trunk opens to store props. Must support weight of a sitting/standing person. Working Tail Lights

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen
Date: 11/25/13

Shopping Cart



1.

Slightly rusted, holds junk and plastic bags. Actor must be able to push cart.
QTY: 1

2

1

Figure 32

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Table



3.

Painted black

3

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Chairs



4.

Nice residential style chairs, 1990s. Same style.
C120, 4

4

Figure 33

TWILIGHT, LOS ANGELES, 1992
Senior Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Rolling Cart

5.



AV rolling cart. Must hold the weight of a tube television. Moves onstage
QTY: 1

5

Figure 34

TWILIGHT, LOS ANGELES, 1992
Senior Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Television

6.



1990's tube television. Must turn on, and show video. Has a long extension
cord to plug in power. -22" in screen size.

6

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Batons



7.

Police Baton. Need 1 official 1990's LAPD baton or similar. Need 7 or so sticks representing batons (shown in the bottom two pictures).

7

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Skateboard



8.

1990's style of street art on the deck.

8

Figure 35

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Spray Paint

9.



Spray Paint Cans (empty or close to empty), closer to the 1990's look.
Cheap brand style.
CITY: 4

9

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Boombox

10.



"Big Ass" Boom box. Late 1980's/early 1990's. Tweeter features, bass, and lights. Live sound
CITY: 1

10

Figure 36

TWILIGHT, LOS ANGELES, 1992
Senior Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Flashlights

11.



Back Mag Light, incandescent light
Qty. 9

11

Figure 37

TWILIGHT, LOS ANGELES, 1992
Senior Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 1/25/13

Cardboard Box

12.



For breddoning. Duct tape seams.

12

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992
Scene Designer: Andrew R. Cohen

Date: 11/25/13

News Camera

13.



Over the shoulder news camera.
Camera has a practical light in it.

13

Figure 38

Chapter 3: PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

The following images (Figure 39-44) are photographs taken by Lauren Joy, Andrew Cohen, and Stan Barouh during the final dress rehearsal of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*.



Figure 39



Figure 40

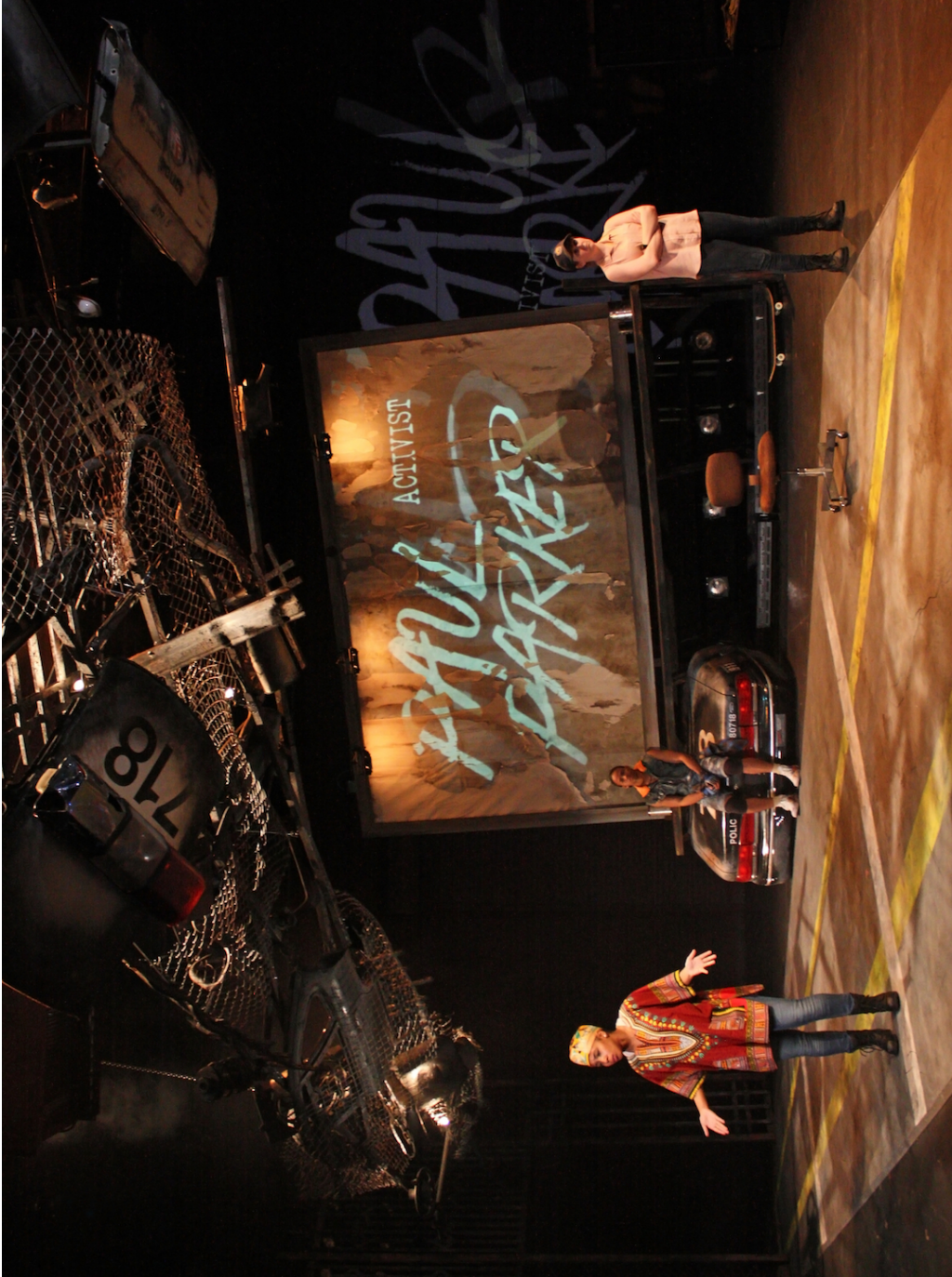


Figure 41



Figure 42

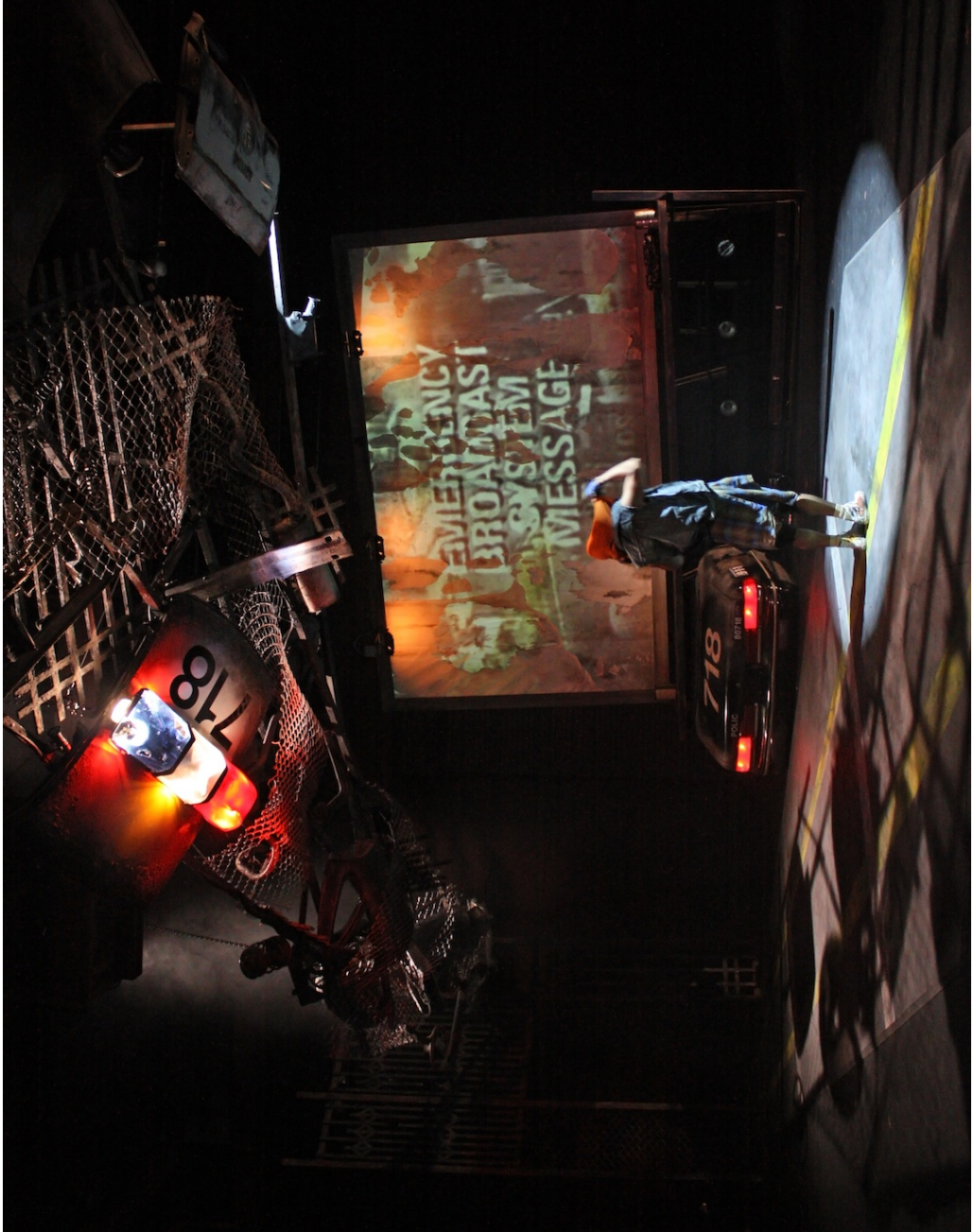


Figure 43



Figure 44

Chapter 4: REFLECTION

In the end, I felt that my scenic design for *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* was very successful. I created a jagged, explosive sculpture that captures the emotional turmoil of the events surrounding the Los Angeles Riots; a sculpture that centered on hostile law enforcement procedures versus the violent societal revolt. The sculpture itself loomed over the heads of the actors, putting the weight of the events on their shoulders. The design gave the actors the space that they need to testify, while still cradling the play in its theatrical environment.

The process of this show was interesting in that the biggest inspiration came from the Hirshhorn Museum, midway through my process. Without experiencing this exhibit, I don't think I would have been able to create such a successful conceptual idea. In the beginning, I struggled with coming up with a design because I was not saying anything scenically in terms of how I felt about the play, and the "Art of Destruction" exhibit awakened my inspiration.

If I had the option to go back into the design and change anything, I would. I felt that the sharp clean line in the floor wasn't successful. The original idea was that the straight line in the floor would echo the straight line in the billboard, but in the end it didn't feel like a real piece of road. The road should have mimicked the jagged line from the sculpture, and look as if it was ripped up straight from Florence and Normandie, the corner where the L.A Riots started. I do think that the forced perspective and directionality of the floor helped make the gesture of the set design thrust into the space, but that makes me question whether or not the billboard should have echoed that decision as well.

I also felt the house right seating bank was not a desirable place to view the play. Some of the extreme side seats couldn't see the projections on the billboard. This was due to a last minute Fire Marshall decision to move the aisle from the extreme house right seating bank to middle of the seating bank. Because of this, seats were placed in spots I didn't design for.

Despite these small issues, I felt the set design landed successfully, and worked well with the direction, costumes, lights, projection, movement and sound. I am proud to have this be my last show I designed at University of Maryland.

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