

ABSTRACT

Title: THE PHYSICISTS BY FRIEDRICH
DURRENMATT - SCENIC DESIGN

Marie-Noëlle Daigneault, MFA, 2007

Directed By: Associate Professor Daniel Conway, Department
of Theatre

The purpose of this thesis is to provide record of the scenic design process for the “*The Physicists*”, produced by the University of Maryland Theatre Department and performed in the Kogod theatre at the Clarice Smith Performing Art Center from November 1st to November 11th 2007.

This document contains visual elements used for the development of the scenic design. The quote “A shabby interior with a prestigious past” and the director’s concept lead me to explore period architecture, the structure of past healthcare facilities, and unusual interiors. I created an interior inspired by research into traditional interiors and tweaked it to suggest the madness that the play called for. I utilized tile to symbolize the doctor’s madness, progressively erasing the history of the room. All the aesthetic choices were selected to create a balance between the antique quality of the villa and the antiseptic feel of an asylum.

THE PHYSICISTS BY FRIEDRICH DURENMATT - SCENIC DESIGN

by

Marie-Noëlle Daigneault

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
2007

Advisory Committee:
Associate Professor Daniel Conway, Chair
Professor Helen Huang
Assistant Professor Misha Kachma

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2007

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1 Research Images:

This is one of the first steps of the process. Visual research is really important and is used as references, historically and/or stylistically, and as a source of inspiration. They are sometimes realistic and specific, and at other time simply emotional, representation of mood and atmosphere or an informative idea,

In this case they are a variety of realistic period interiors, functional health care facilities interesting furniture pieces, and abstract spaces. These last one, as mentioned above, depict mood, emotion, idea or a surreal evocative environment.

1.1 Period interior:

The concept the director and I agreed on called for a non-specific time period. The play would take place in the present, in an old French style villa, which have been renovated numerous times in the past. We wanted to mix styles and breaking the usual and expected structure of an interior. The interior research illustrates this decision. There is a strong mix between classic and Victorian interior, panel mouldings, chair rails, and arch and square doorways.

Elements of interest:

- The arch entryway.
- The thickness of the molding.
- The height of the doorway.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p.

Elements of interest:

- The arch entryway.
- The columns.
- The minimal coloration and variation in value.
- The thickness of the molding.
- The height of the doorway.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p

Elements of interest:

- The arch entryway.
- The thickness of the molding.
- The height of the doorway.
- Crown moulding.
- Chair rail.
- Base moulding.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p

Elements of interest:

- The arch entryway.
- The thickness of the molding.
- The height of the doorway.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p

Elements of interest:

- The window shapes.
- The height of the ceiling.
- The fireplace.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p

Elements of interest:

- The location of the windows in relation to the rest of the room and the fireplace.



Zukowsky, John and Stimson Robbe Pierce. *Hudson River villas*. New York : Rizzoli, 1985. 224 p.

Elements of interest:

- The height of the room.
- The windows.
- The coloration.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p

Elements of interest:

- Even if it is an English interior, the quality of the wood of the parquet floor.
- The rigid feature of the fireplace.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p

Elements of interest:

- The scale.



Corbis. "drawing room" file VU005372.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

1.2 Fireplaces:

The fireplace became a central part of the design early in the process. It anchors a room and create a focal point. If joint with decorative elements, it cans dominate the room. Fireplace were studied in previous images but the following were mainly chosen for the interesting shape, size, dimension of the their fireplace.

Elements of interest:

- The size of the fireplace.
- The curve element of architecture.
- The height of the shelve.
It became clear this fireplace was too high for my concept due to my interest in juxtaposing a oversize portrait.



Girouard, Mark. *The Victorian country house..* New Haven : Yale University Press. 1979. 467 p.

Elements of interest:

- The minimal style.
- The fireplace.
- The height of ceiling.
- The size of molding.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design.* New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p.

Elements of interest:

- The arch entryway.
- The thickness of the molding.
- The height of the doorway.



Long, Helen C. *The Edwardian house : the middle-class home in Britain, 1880-1914*. New York : Manchester University Press. 1993. 208 p.

Elements of interest:

- The panel molding.
- The fireplaces.
- The frames.
- The size of the crown molding.



De Breffny, Brian and Ffolliot, Rosemary t. *The houses of Ireland: domestic architecture from the medieval castle to the Edwardian villa*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1981. 240 p.

Elements of interest:

- The fireplace details.



Long, Helen C. *The Edwardian house : the middle-class home in Britain, 1880-1914*. New York : Manchester University Press. 1993. 208 p.

1.3 Furniture

The furniture choice followed the concept that the mansion was build and than renovated many time. The furniture would be an accumulation of modern and antique pieces. I chose a lot more antiques due to the old nature of the mansion but also to create a between the time period of the characters played by the physicists and the object the doctor choose for their space. It also created unity within the room.

Elements of interest:

- Possibility for the side table next to the couch. Victorian/Georgian in style.
- The possibility to have a music stand to bring a little bit of Einstein into the drawing room.



Lewis, Hinckley F. *The more significant Georgian furniture*. New York: Washington Mews Book, c1990. 125 p.



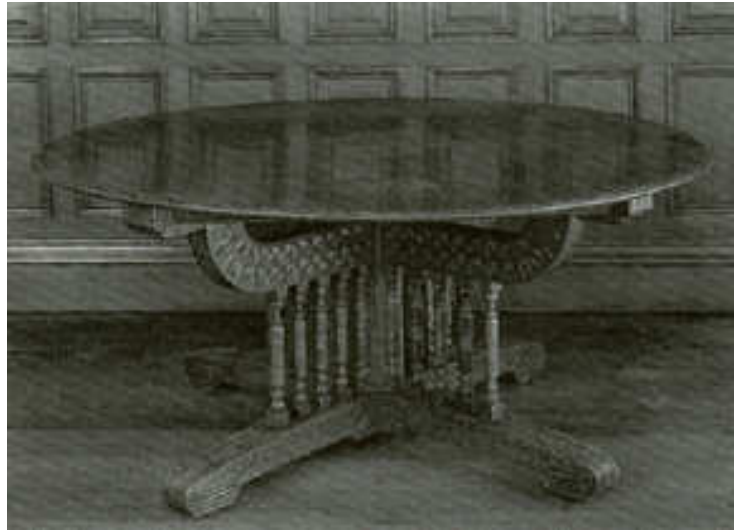
Lewis, Hinckley F. *The more significant Georgian furniture*. New York: Washington Mews Book, c1990. 125 p.



Lewis, Hinckley F. *The more significant Georgian furniture*. New York: Washington Mews Book, c1990. 125 p.

Elements of interest:

- The style, the mass of space it takes.
- The visual weight.



Cooper, Jeremy. *Victorian and Edwardian decor : from the Gothic revival to art nouveau*. New York : Abbeville Press, c1987. 256 p.

Elements of interest:

- The style, the mass of space it takes.
- The visual weight.
- The weight of the top of the table.



Cooper, Jeremy. *Victorian and Edwardian decor : from the Gothic revival to art nouveau*. New York : Abbeville Press, c1987. 256 p.

Elements of interest:

- The minimal style.
- The couch.



Salny, Stephen M. *Frances Elkins: interior design*.
New York : W.W. Norton & Co. 2005. 208 p



Corbis. "victorian" file CN001054.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May,
2007).



Corbis. "victorian" file AALQ001756.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).



Corbis. "victorian" file LX004270.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

1.4 Hospice and asylum

Researching the mood of hospice facility was important. I wasn't interested in the modern institution. Even if the play was set in the modern era, the institution was old, the installations were old, and the subject had an old characters. I directed my researches toward various types of hospices from various time periods. I wanted to look at the hospices where patient are free to move and go and the one in which they are clearly caged and limited. I discovered texture, surfaces, motif, and mood.

1.4.1 The comfortable hospice

Elements of interest:

- Large window.
- Large empty space between the furniture.



Paul James and Tony Noakes. *Hospital architecture*. New York: Longman, 1994

Elements of interest:

- The vast space.
- The chess table, the game, the recreational room.



Bush-Brown, Albert. *Hospitable design for healthcare and senior communities*. New York : Van Nostrand Reinhold, c1992. 263p.

Elements of interest:

- The television.



Paul James and Tony Noakes. *Hospital architecture*. New York: Longman, 1994.

Elements of interest:

- The institutional chair.
- The colors.



Paul James and Tony Noakes. *Hospital architecture*. New York: Longman, 1994.

Elements of interest:

- The television.



Bush-Brown, Albert. *Hospitable design for healthcare and senior communities*. New York : Van Nostrand Reinhold, c1992. 263p.

1.4.2 The asylum; the caged space.

The following images are a collection of health care facilities that are less comfortable. They tend to look more like prisons or Army hospitals.

Elements of interest:

- Large room.
- The tiled floor.



Encyclopedie de l'architecture; Hopitaux maisons de sante, 1994.

Elements of interest:

- The shadows.
- The tiles on the walls and the large tiles on the floor.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file DWF15-367488.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

Elements of interest:

- The colors.
- The style.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file ZZFM001331.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

Elements of interest:

- The reflection from the tiles.
- The varied type of tiles.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file TL020939.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

Elements of interest:

- The reflection from the tiles.
- The colors.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file TL005686.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

Elements of interest:

- The glossiness of the wall.
- The division line.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file APA-F-012327-0000.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

Elements of interest:

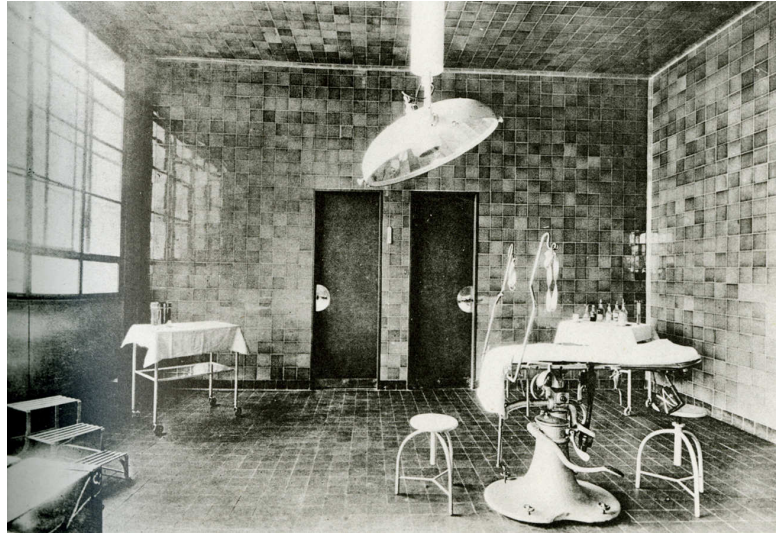
- The tiles.
- The division line.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file DWF15-1032577.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

Elements of interest:

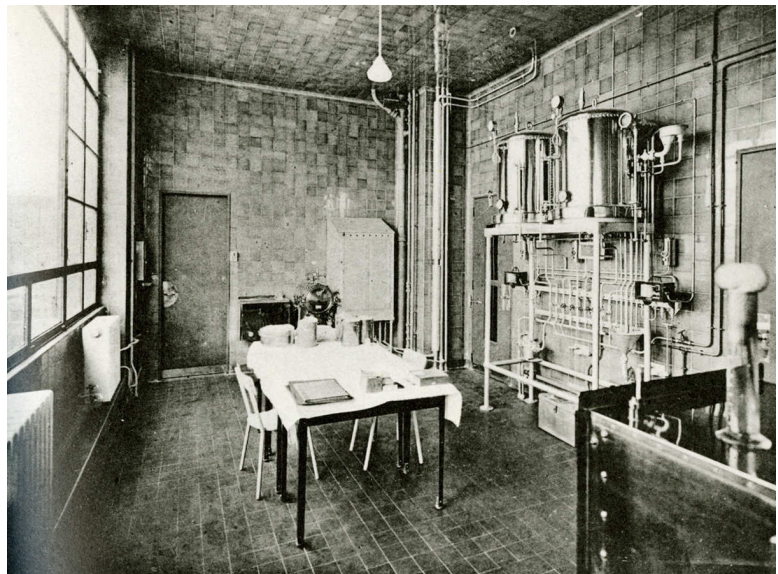
- The tiles on the walls and on the floor.
- The creation of texture by the tiles.



Encyclopedie de l'architecture; Hopitaux maisons de sante, 1994.

Elements of interest:

- The tiles on the walls and on the floor.
- The creation of texture by the tiles.



Encyclopedie de l'architecture; Hopitaux maisons de sante, 1994.

Elements of interest:

- The radiator.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file DWF15-510210
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007)

Elements of interest:

- The cart and the doors.



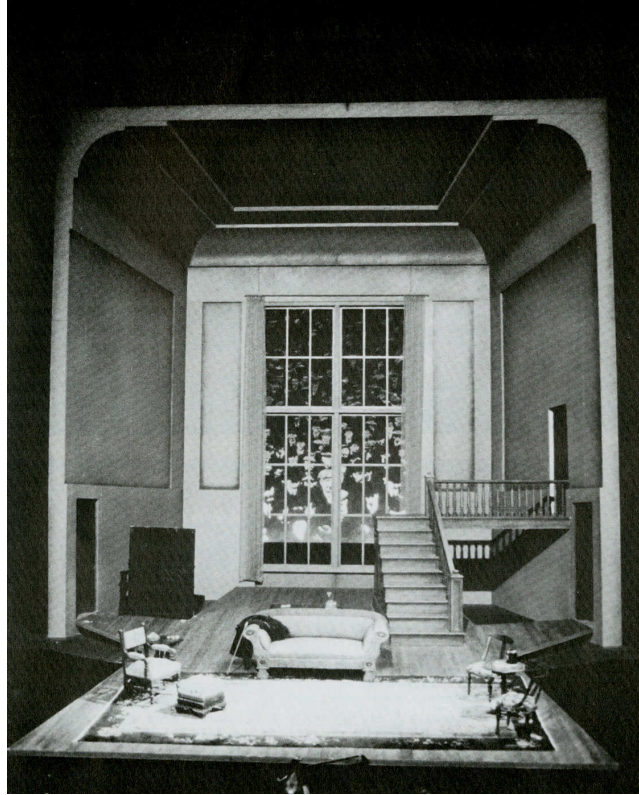
Encyclopedie de l'architecture; Hopitaux maisons de sante, 1994.

1.4.3 Inspiration:

The following images were chosen for their use of scale, texture and/or mood.

Elements of interest:

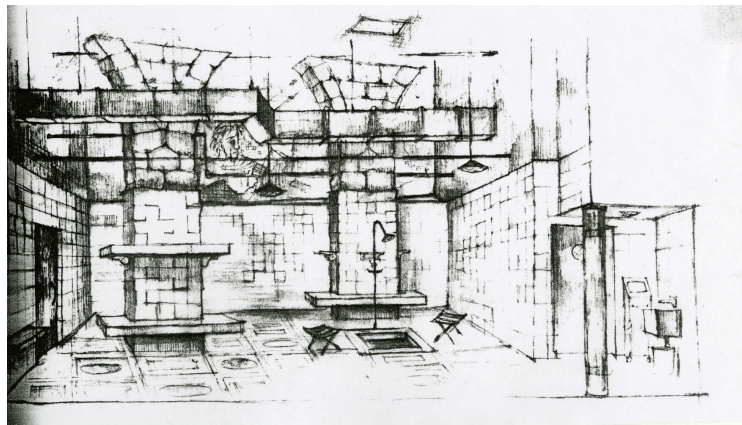
- The distance between the ceiling and the floor.
- The proportion between the furniture and the room.



Aronson, Arnold. *American set design*. New York : Theatre Communications Group, 1985. 182 p.

Element of interest:

- The tiles.
- The height.



Aronson, Arnold. *American set design*. New York : Theatre Communications Group, 1985. 182 p.

Elements of interest:

- The scale.



Aronson, Arnold. *American set design*. New York : Theatre Communications Group, 1985. 182 p.

Elements of interest:

- The scale.



Skrdla, Harry. *Ghostly ruins: America's forgotten architecture*. New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. 224 p.

Elements of interest:

- The line created by the 2 colors on the wall.
- The radiator.
- The mix of modern and old icons.



Baldeck, Andrea. *Presence passing*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007. 209 p.

Elements of interest:

- The animals against the tiles.



Baldeck, Andrea. *Presence passing*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007. 209 p.

1.4.4 Portraits:

Elements of interest:

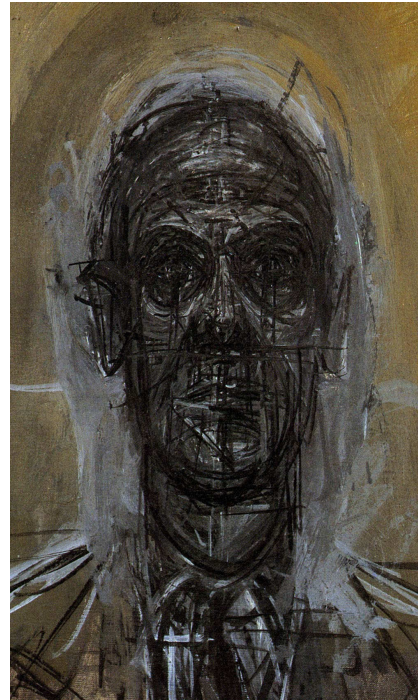
- The cold but yet not menacing expression.
- The official attitude.



Corbis. "male portrait, sargent" file 42-16782690 [Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007)

Elements of interest:

- The expressive gesture.
- The dirty colors.
- The structural line quality.
- The tension expressed by the lines.



Matter, Herbert. *Alberto Giacometti* New York: Abrams, 1987. 224 p.

1.4.5 Color Inspirations

The following images were chosen for their subject but also for their colors. The main interest was mainly to study the color palette used in a medical institution.

Elements of interest:

- The colors.
- The glow.



Paul James and Tony Noakes. *Hospital architecture*. New York: Longman, 1994.

Elements of interest:

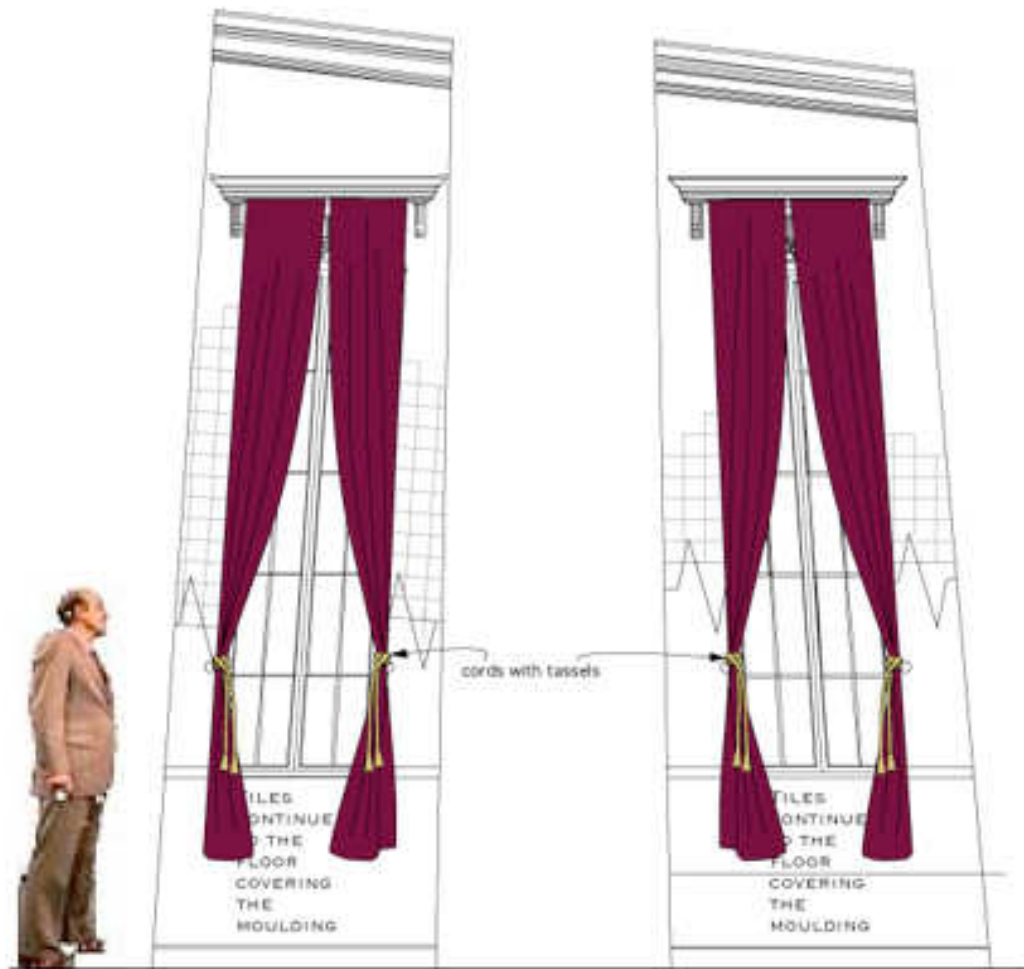
- The colors.



Corbis. "Asylum and hospice" file DWF15-908172.
[Http://www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com) (accessed 20 May, 2007).

1.4.6 Landscapes and windows

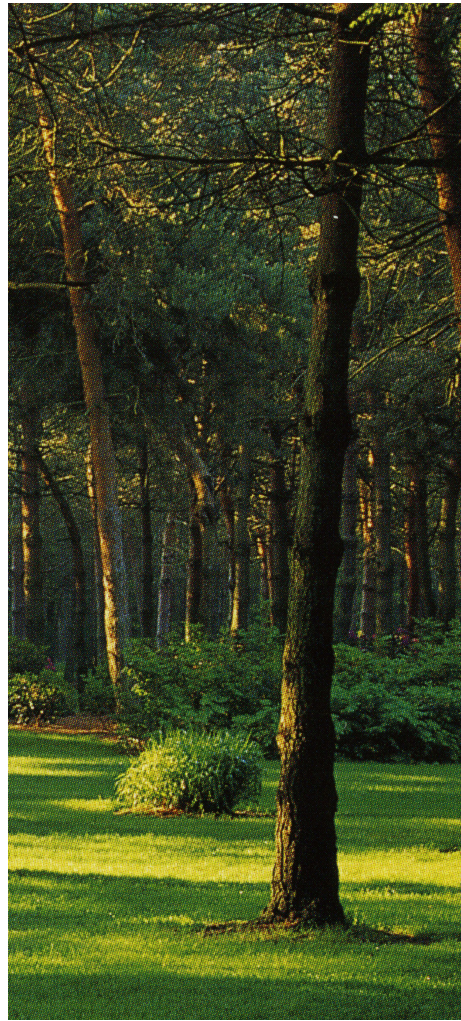
Here is illustrated how the window needed to be dressed.



2 printed landscape where situated 2'6" behind the windows. Those were than remove in the second act to reveal the brick walls, symbolizing the confinement of the asylum.



Adams, Ian. The art of garden photography. Portland: Timber Press. 2005. 199 p.

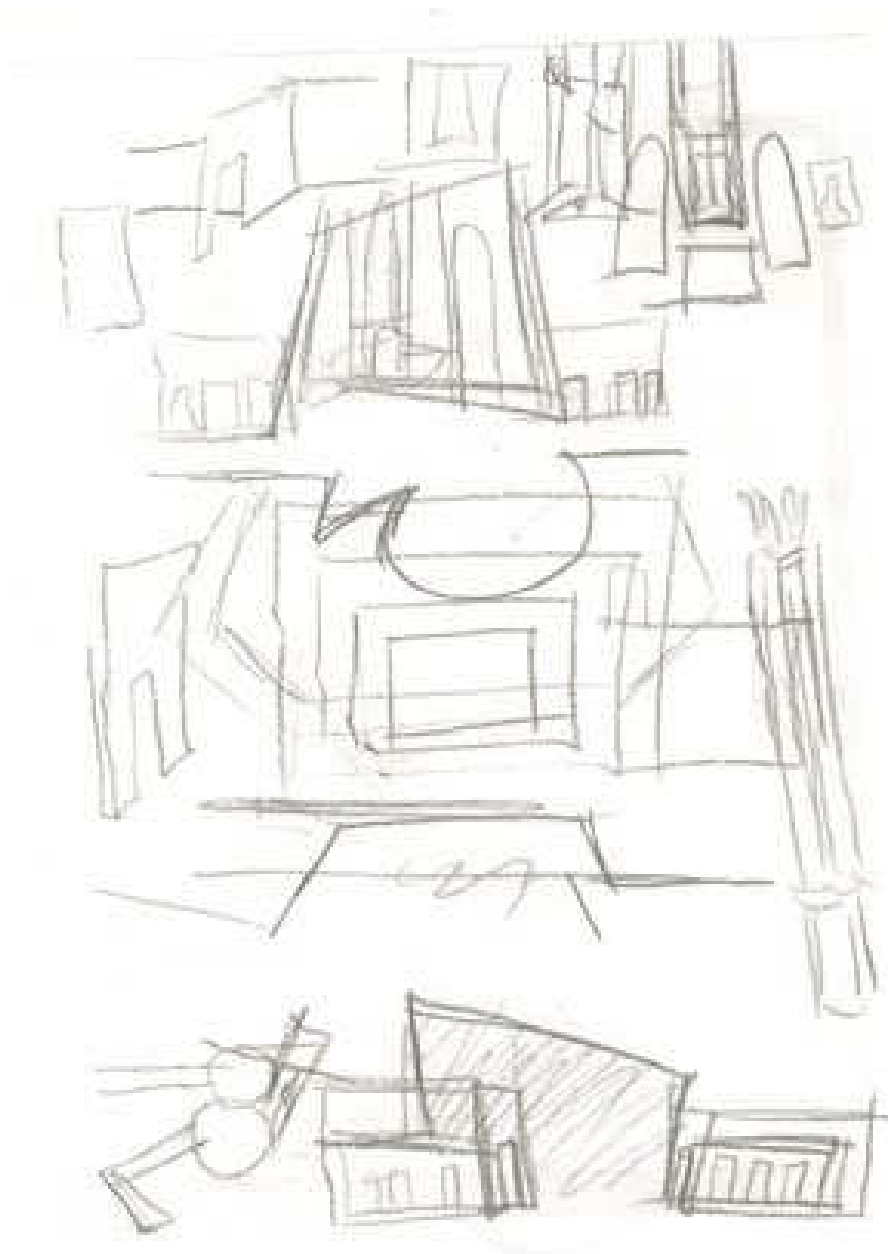


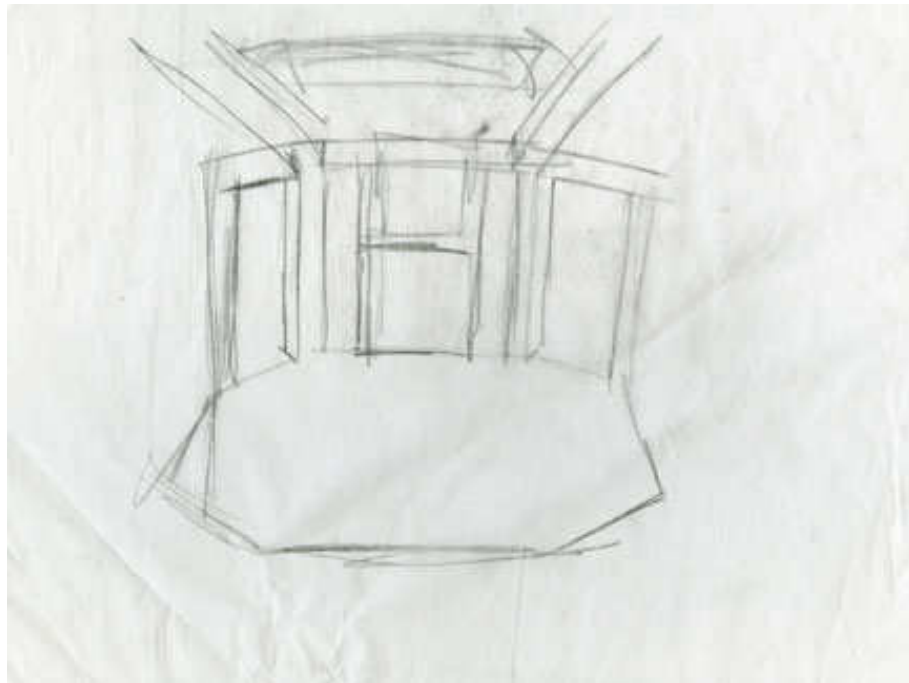
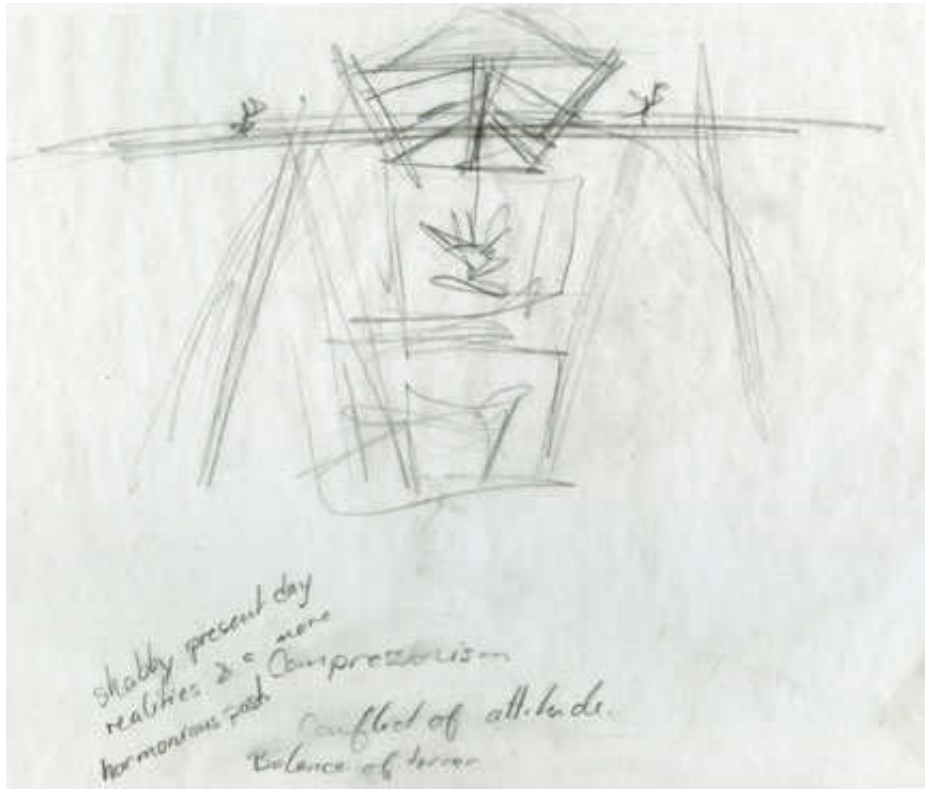
Adams, Ian. The art of garden photography. Portland: Timber Press. 2005. 199 p.

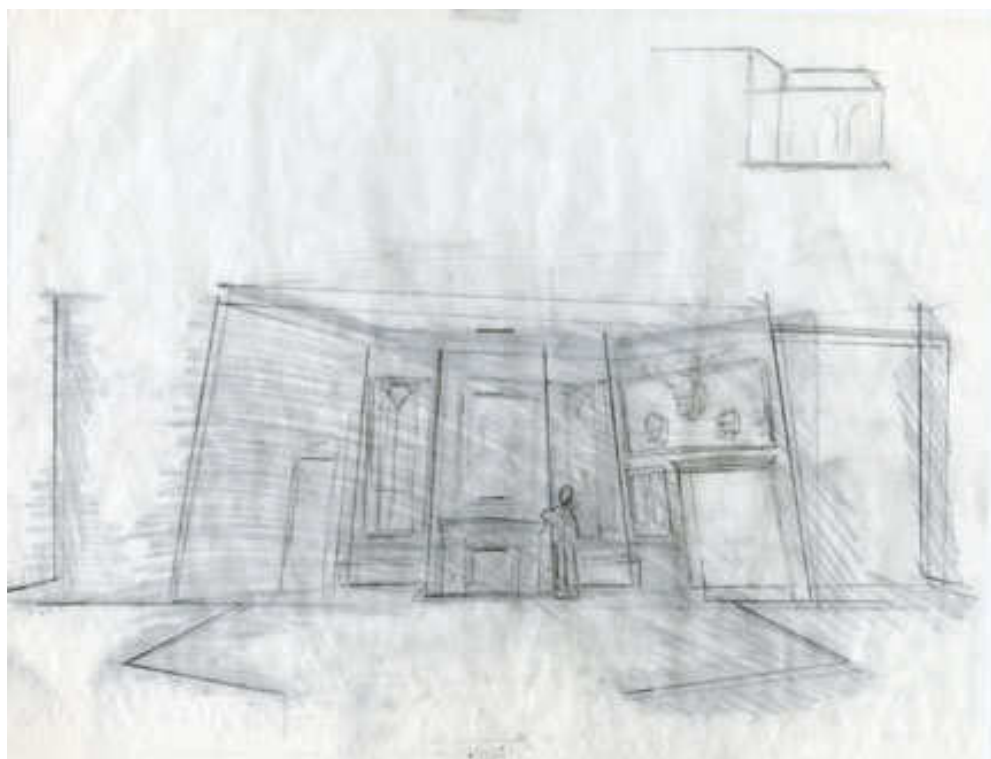
2 Sketches and Renderings

The following images illustrate various steps of the creative process. They are organized in chronological order and vary from line sketches to quick renderings and pictures of the model. They are exploration of shape, style, space, lines, directions and colors.

2.1 Various lines studies.







2.2 Renderings:

Renderings of the early concept, that illustrate dilemma between the use of the slanted or straight wall. The quantity of set dressing varies but is constant in style. The existence of the outside hallways is also suggested but not decided. The form of the header is also questioned, and explore. The large proportion of the room is explored. It creates an unbalance in power between the possible comfort of the space and the power the physicists might be able to exercise on their environment



This is one of the final rendering before the model phase. The space enlarged, the hallways are more visible but still in the background. The space and the header were simplified. There are still some elements of style been explored which are finalized in the model and draftings.



3 Model

View 1



View 2



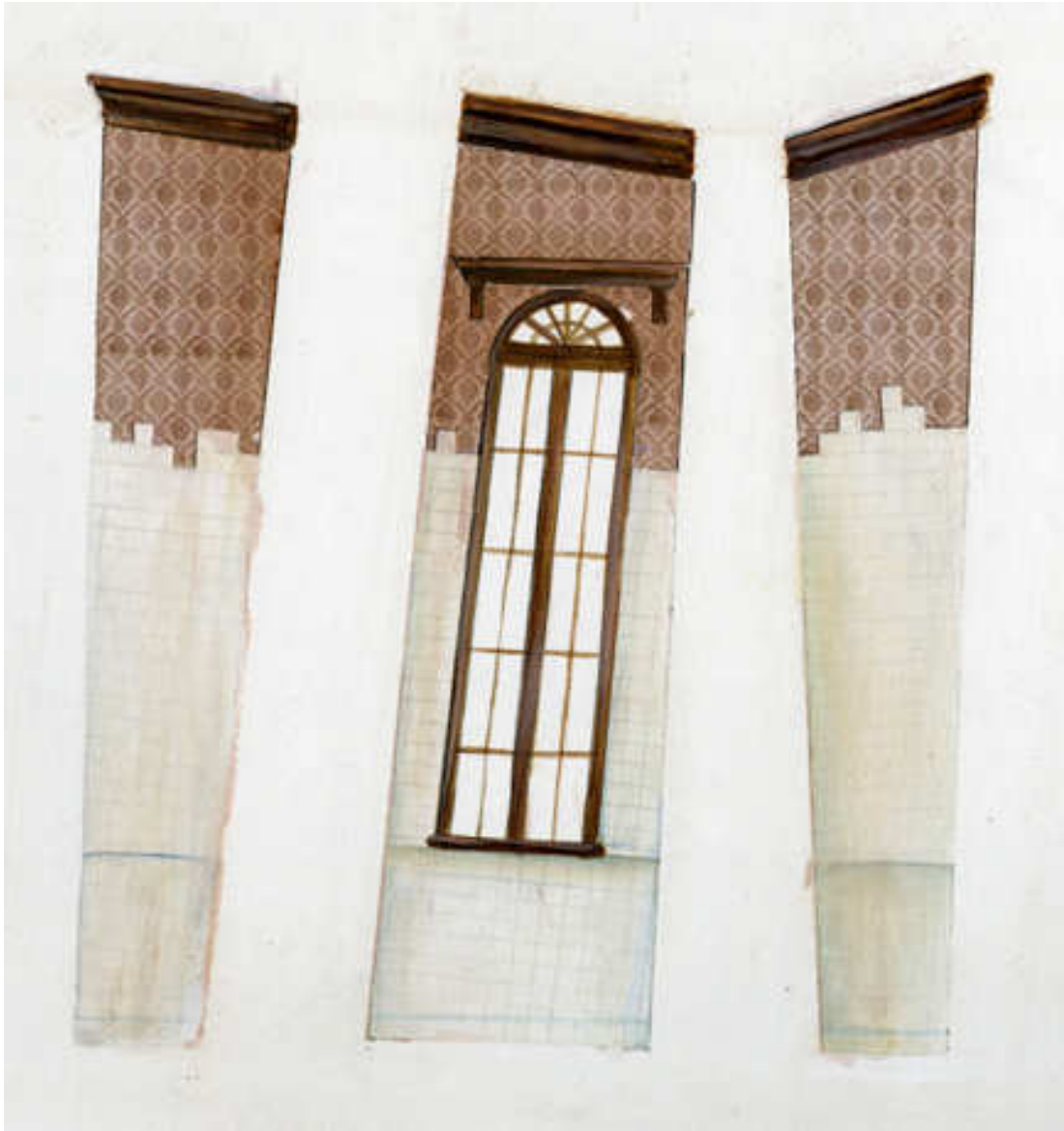
4 Paint Elevation

The scenic designer creates the paint elevations. They are the representation of the paint treatments that need to be applied on the scenery. For *The Physicists* it consisted in an elevation of the main walls, and representations of the main textures. They were all created from acrylic and glued paper elements.

4.1 The Walls:



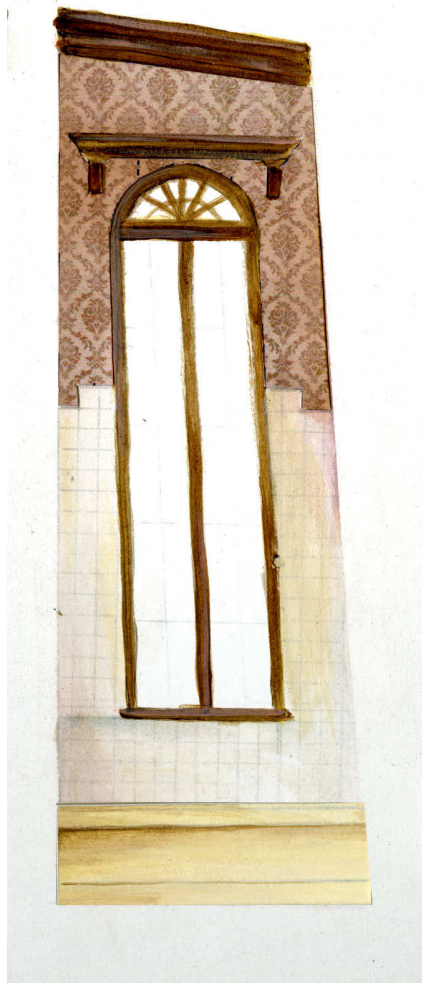
Wall A-B and C1



Wall C1, C and C2



Wall D, E1 and E



Wall E with bench.



Wall E2, F and G

4.2 Texture or Elements.



Tiled wall, paint treatment.



Wood mouldings, paint treatment.



Floor tiles, paint treatment



Brick wall and chimney, paint treatment.

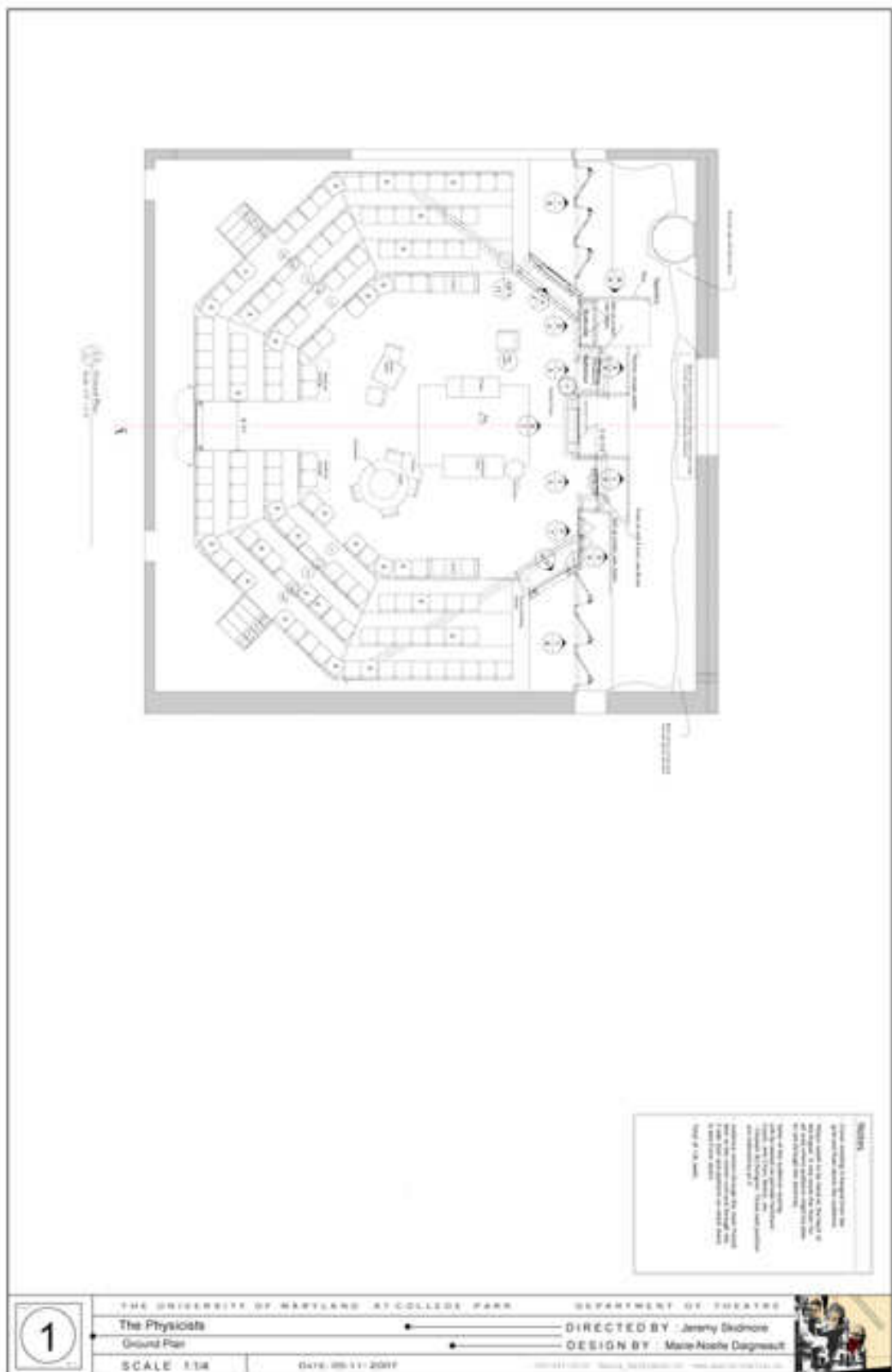


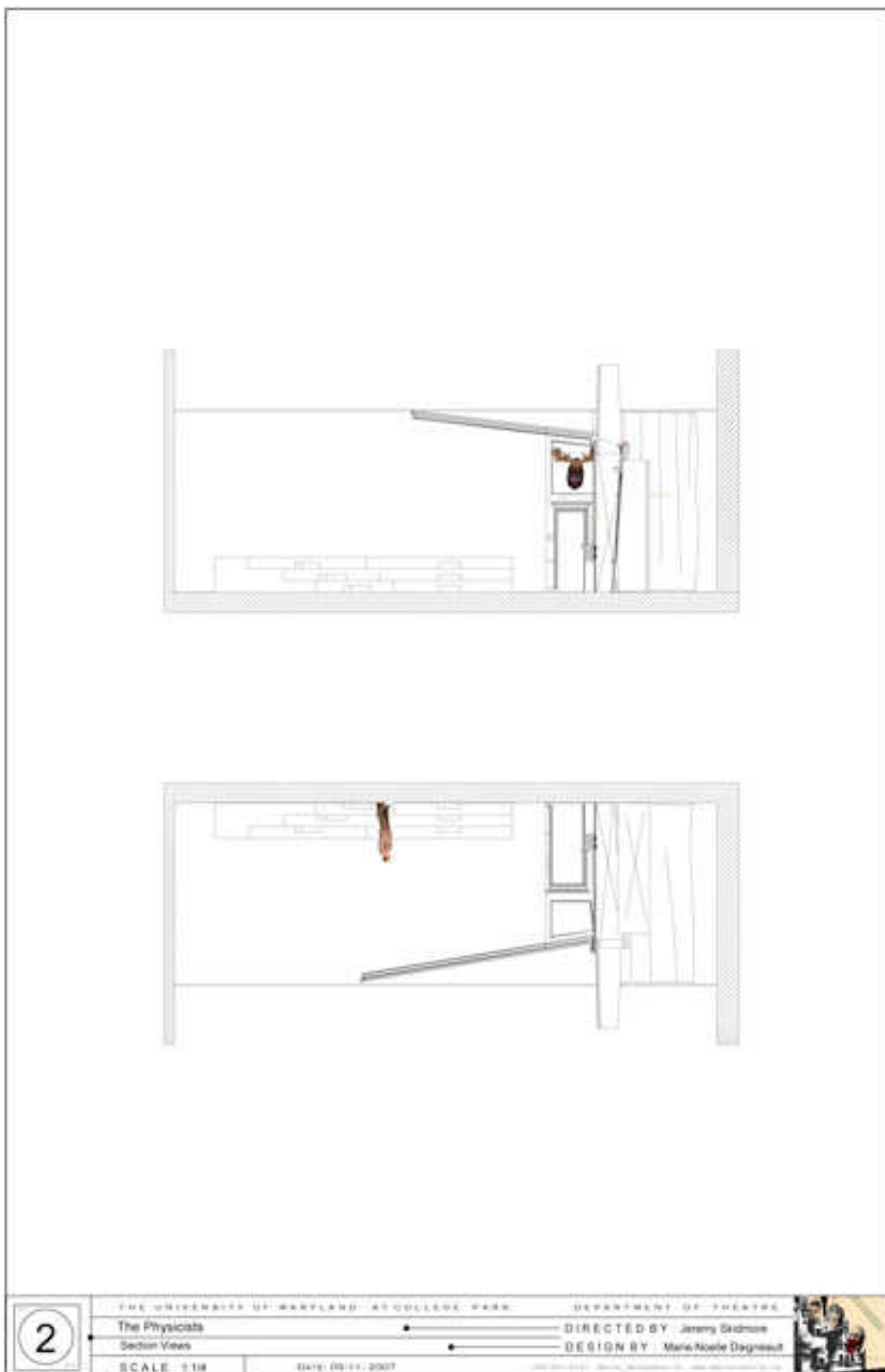
Marble piece at the foot of the fireplace, paint treatment

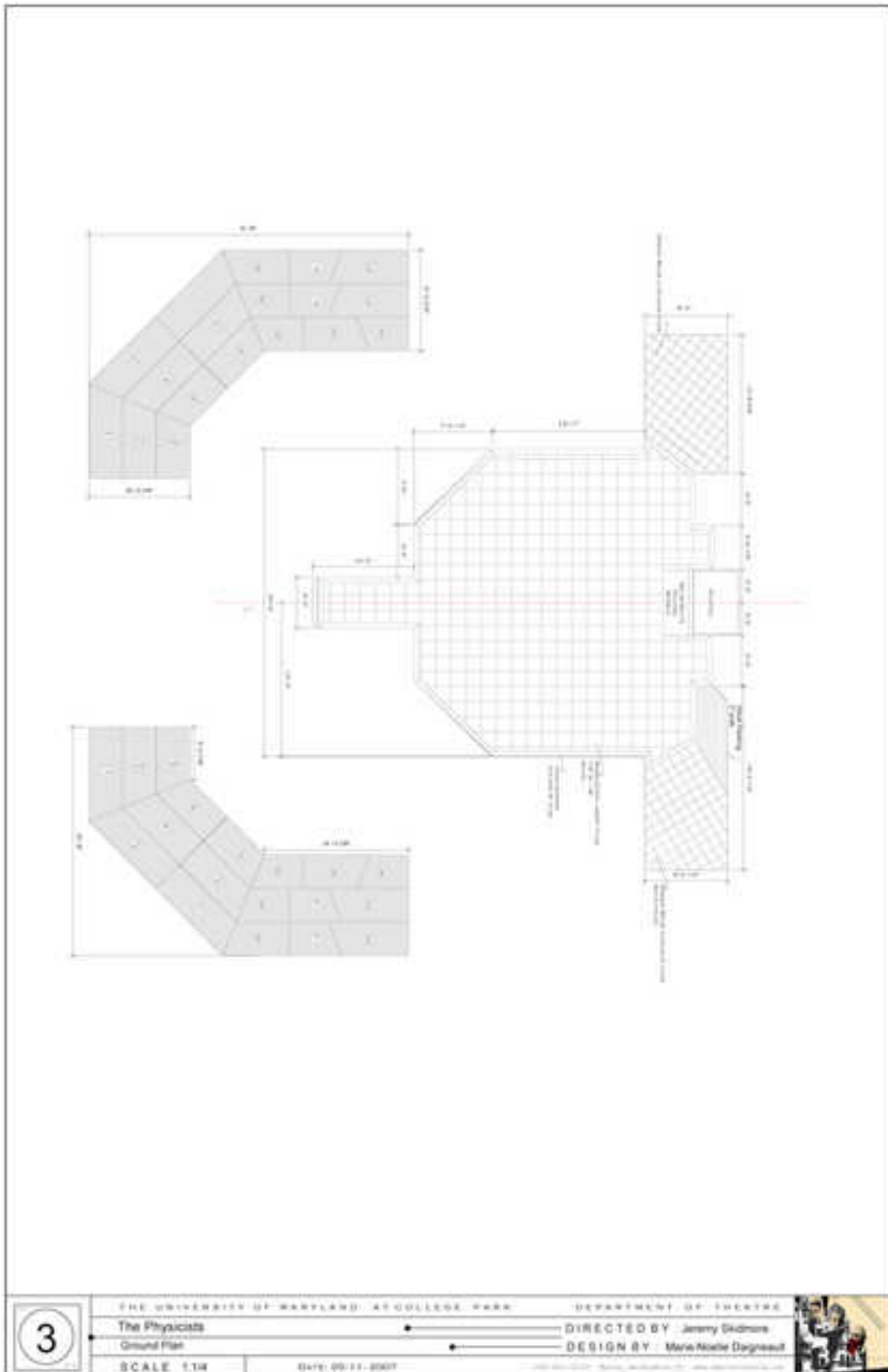


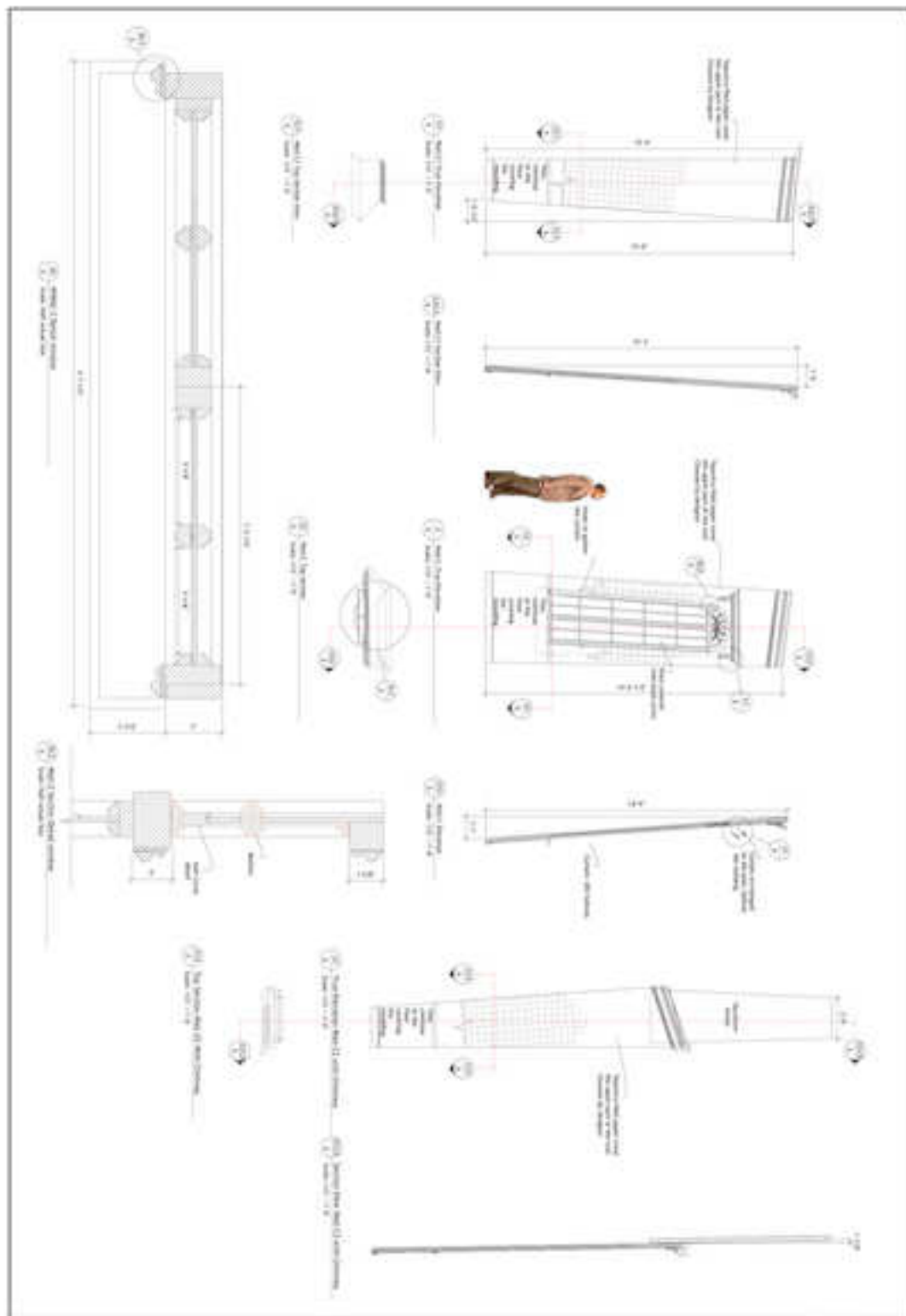
Hallway's door paint treatment

5 Draftings









5 THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
 The Physicists DIRECTED BY: Jeremy Skidmore
 Walls C Elevation DESIGN BY: Marie-Nicole Despres
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0" DATE: 05/11/2007

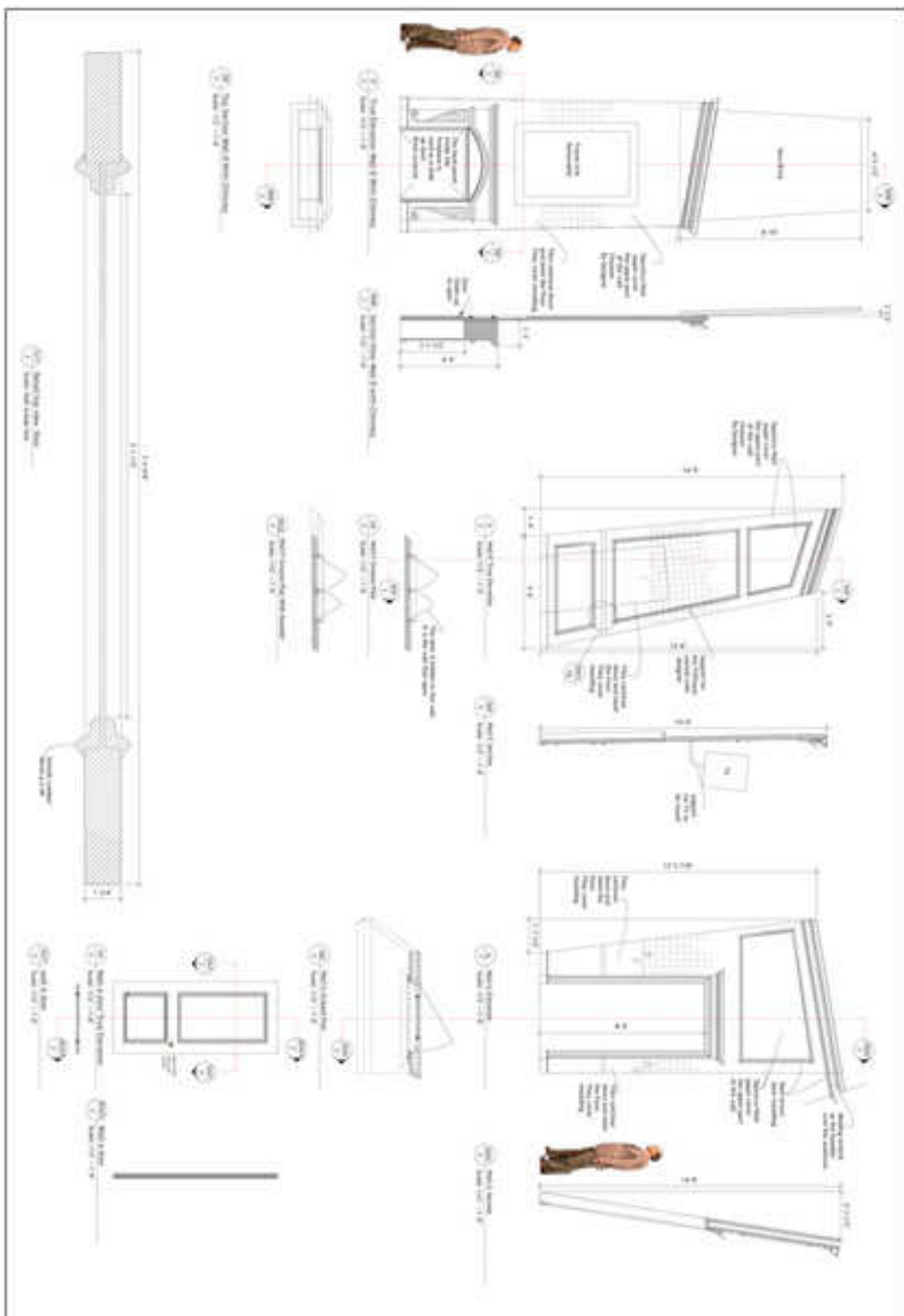
6

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

The Physicists DIRECTED BY: Jeremy Gudimov

Walls E Elevation DESIGN BY: Mark Noble Degroot

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0" DATE: 06.11.2007



<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;"> 7 </div>	THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK	DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
	The Physicists Sets & Scenery	DIRECTED BY: Jerry Gilmore DESIGN BY: Mark-Noble Degraff
	SCALE 1/10	DATE: 05/11/2007

The image contains architectural drawings for a theater set. At the top, there are two elevation drawings of the set walls, labeled 'Wall 1 (Stage Right)' and 'Wall 2 (Stage Left)'. Each wall features a grid pattern and a central opening. Below these are two cross-section drawings showing the depth of the set, with dimensions such as 10'-0" and 15'-0" indicated. To the right, a small figure of a person in a brown coat and hat is shown for scale. At the bottom left, a title block contains the following information:

8
 THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
 The Physicists DIRECTED BY: Jeremy Gudimov
 Walls 1 & 2 Elevation DESIGN BY: Marie-Noelle Dagnault
 SCALE 1/2 DATE 06-11-2007

Additional text in the title block includes: "© 2007 The University of Maryland at College Park. All rights reserved." and "The University of Maryland at College Park is an Equal Opportunity Institution." A small photograph of the theater set is located in the bottom right corner of the title block.

The drawing set includes a floor plan at the top left showing a rectangular shaft with a grid of reinforcement. Below it are three elevations (left, right, and front) showing the shaft's profile with reinforcement patterns. To the right are two sections showing the shaft's depth and structural details. Annotations include grid lines (A through G) and callouts for reinforcement specifications.

9

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

The Physicists DIRECTED BY: Jeremy Sidmore

Wells K. L & M Elevator DESIGN BY: Marie-Noelle Daignault

SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0" DATE: 05-11-2007

Architectural drawing showing detailed views of a stage set for "The Physicists". The drawing includes a perspective view of a desk and chair, a side elevation of a desk with a lamp, a top-down view of a desk, and a section view of a desk. Annotations describe materials like "Solid Pine" and "Solid Pine with 1/2\"/>

10

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

The Physicists DIRECTED BY: Jeremy Gudimov

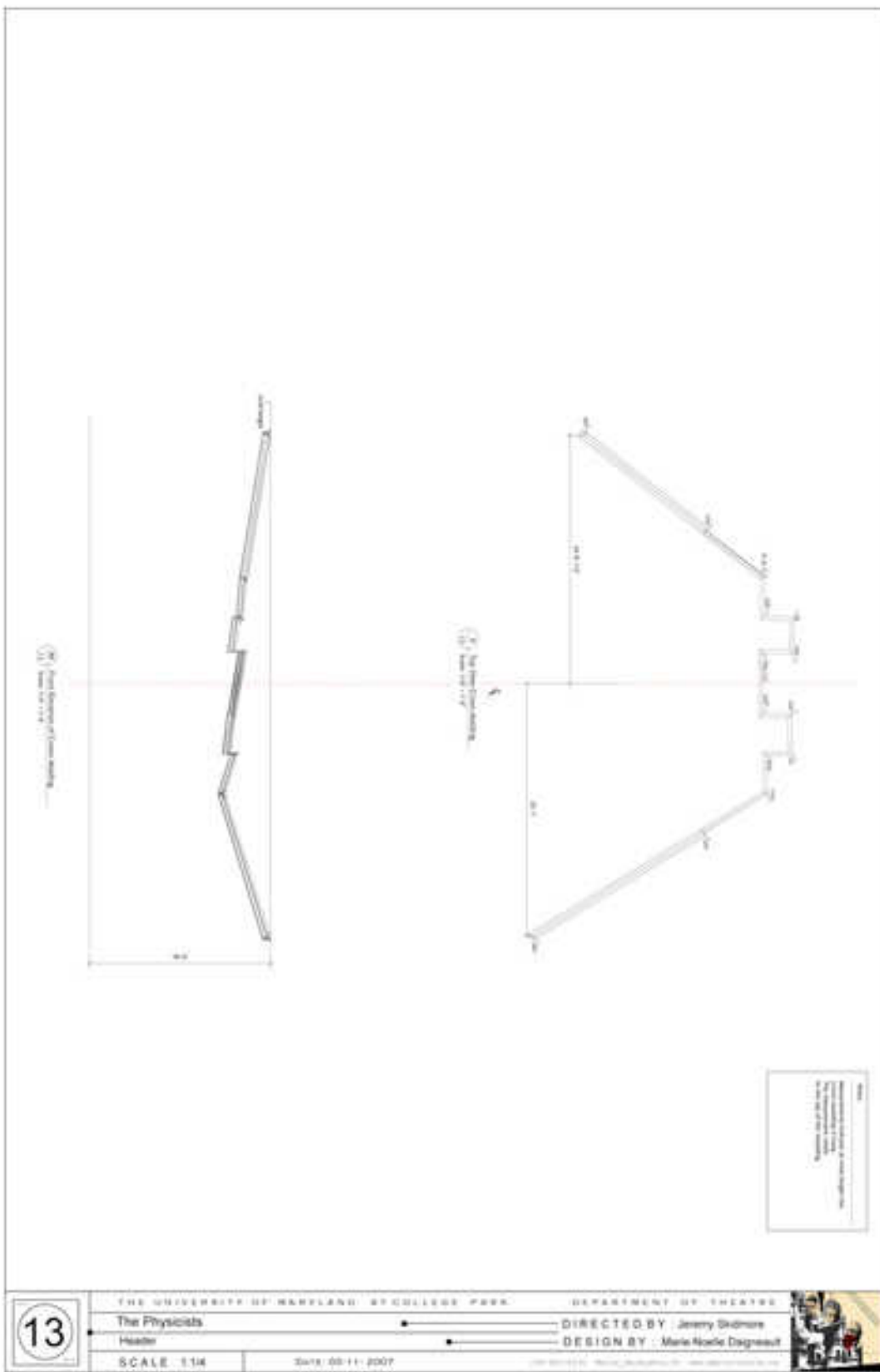
Detail sheet 1 DESIGN BY: Marie-Noelle Dagnault

Scale as specified DATE: 05.17.2007

Architectural drawings for 'The Physicists' set design, showing various views of a stage structure with callouts and dimensions.

- Top Left:** A perspective view of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Top Middle:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Top Right:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Middle Left:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Middle Middle:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Middle Right:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Bottom Left:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Bottom Middle:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"
- Bottom Right:** A side elevation of a stage structure with callouts: "ALL STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED WITH 1/2\"

11 THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
 The Physicists DIRECTED BY Jeremy Skidmore
 Detail sheet 2 DESIGN BY Mark-Henke Daignault
 Scale as specified DWG 00-11-2007



6 Production Photos

These pictures represent the end result. They are a testimony of the work done by the designer and the shops



Preset of the show.



Beginning of act 1



Beginning of act 1



Newton and inspector Voss smoke in front of the fireplace and portrait.



Mobius and nurse Monica talk about their future.



End of Act 2, Nurse Monica was murdered and rests on the chair SR.



Beginning of Act 2, the inspector is back after the murder of Nurse Monica. The male attendants introduce themselves.



Mobius, Newton and Einstein reveal their real identities and argued about their social responsibilities as physicists. Mobius convinces them to stay forever in the asylum. They celebrate their decision.



The Frauen Doctor reveals her master plan and locks the physicists in.

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2. Adams, Ian. *The art of garden photography*. Portland: Timber Press. 2005. 199 p.
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4. Baldeck, Andrea. *Presence passing*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007. 209 p.
5. Bush-Brown, Albert. *Hospitable design for healthcare and senior communities*. New York : Van Nostrand Reinhold, c1992. 263 p.
6. Cooper, Jeremy. *Victorian and Edwardian decor : from the gothic revival to art nouveau*. New York : Abbeville Press, c1987. 256 p.
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