ABSTRACT

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Theatre

This abstract tracks the concept and costume design process for <u>That Face</u>. Through written explanation, research, drawings, renderings, fitting and production photos, I will explain how the costume design for <u>That Face</u> was completed. It was produced at Studio Theatre in Washington, DC. The production opened February 21, 2010 and closed March 14, 2010. It was directed by Rahaleh Nassri, set designed by: Luciana Stecconi, lights designed by: Colin Bills, and sound designed by: Elisheba Ittoop.

THAT FACE: A COSTUME DESIGN

By

Kristin Leigh Hall

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

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Advisory Committee: Helen Q. Huang, Chair Leslie Felbain Brian MacDevitt © Copyright by Kristin Leigh Hall 2010

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis first of all to my parents, Bruce and Sunny Hall, for their never-ending support and encouragement. I would like to also like to dedicate it to the many teachers I've had over the years who helped me reach and realize my potential: Theresa Ripley, Virgil Johnson, Linda Roethke, Rives Collins, Ana Kuzmanic, Brian MacDevitt, Leslie Felbain, Dan Conway, and Helen Huang.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my sisters, Corey and Kirby Hall, who were my first collaborators and challenged me constantly to expand my imagination and instilled my passion for drawing and creating.

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Concept Statement

Polly Stenham's story <u>That Face</u> begins at a London boarding school with a terrifying hazing incident. The two girls, Mia and Izzy, are terrifying a much younger and innocent Alice, claiming dominance over her. The girls get caught and are sent home, and the next thing we see is Martha and Henry, Mia's mother and brother. It is there that we learn of Martha and Henry's disturbingly incestuous relationship as well as Henry's martyred role as caretaker to their drug addicted and alcoholic mother. The routine of their lives is challenged with Mia's unexpected arrival, as old family issues resurface once Hugh, the father who left them and started a new family all the way in Hong Kong, returns to set matters straight.

I felt badly for all of them. All each character wanted was some form of acceptance, but no one was going about getting it in a healthy way. It seemed like no one was willing to say how he or she really felt. The kind of love and acceptance they needed from each other could not be achieved without each person admitting how they were at fault. Instead of having open and honest discussions with each other, their affection (particularly Henry and Martha's) came out in disturbingly unhealthy ways. Sex was mistaken for motherly love. Misbehaving at school was mistaken for delinquency rather than a plea for attention. An iron fist that was meant to protect only gave the impression of a tyrant. No one was communicating effectively with each other, but at the same time, you could tell that they cared deeply for one another.

I was thrilled to be a part of Studio's production of <u>That Face</u>, which opened February 21, 2010. I started my process in late August by reading the script. What I took away from my first reading was how disconnected all of the characters were from each other. The only one who seemed to care and regard for others was Henry. Besides Henry, though, everyone else worried about themselves and how the situation would affect them. It was such an apparent disconnect between all of the characters (even Henry, as all the other characters took his generosity for granted) that I wanted to show this in the costume design. Even though I felt that the characters were distant from each other and selfish, but I also wanted the audience to be sympathetic towards them.

The costume design would play a strong role in this, and with the right choice of fabrics and textures, I knew I would be able to help the characters be sympathetic. To show their disconnect, though, each of them needed to have their own, very individual sense of style. It was no small task.

In September, when I and the other designers met with our director, Rahaleh Nassri, the first thing we talked about was that these people came from a world of quality things. They had designer clothes and high-class furniture. Even though Martha, Henry, and Mia were living off of the small child support checks sent by Hugh, they still maintained an appearance of being wealthy and comfortable. Rahaleh and I talked about how Mia and Henry do not spend their money on a lot of clothes, but they have a few high quality pieces.

Martha also has very well made and expensive clothes, but they were all from around 1999, before Hugh left them and was still providing for the family. The idea

was that there was only enough money to buy the kids new things, and it also kept Martha in a different world from the other characters.

Martha was not as difficult to identify with as I originally thought. When I first read the script, I imagined the character of Martha as a Blanche DuBois of 2010. She is an echo of a once vibrant, charismatic young woman who put all of her hopes and future into a man and a marriage. I understand why she made the choice to marry a wealthy man who swept her off her feet. She is not a bad person; she just made a decision to start a family before she had tried a life for herself. Now she has lost that happy family life and turned to drinking to forget her problems. I believe she was extremely hurt and shamed when Hugh left, and once she was faced with the idea of raising two children alone, she could not deal with the reality of their situation.

She remains in the bedroom, where most of the action takes place on the bed.

Luciana Stecconi (set designer) wanted to make the bed to focal point of the room.

We talked about maybe Martha would be in one robe look for most of the show, but I pushed the idea that we see Martha in as many robes and gowns as possible. This is a woman who was once very stylish and took pride in her appearance. The fact that she has held on to these robes for such a long time puts her in a less stable mind. Keeping these robes is her way to relive happier times. She bought them during a time when her marriage was happy and loving.

The fact that she still has these robes also shows her love for her children.

The money Hugh sends to his family is spent only on the children. Martha does not use the money to buy herself new things. She makes sure Mia and Henry have new and stylish clothes before she would ever think of buying something new for herself.

We thought that the best way to tell this story was realistically and strove for the feeling of presenting an up-close and in-your-face format. That meant that the small space would be made even smaller by the set designer, and the goal of the transitions was that they were as fast as possible, to aid in the feeling that the scene changes were more like film than theatre. For costumes, this meant that every minute detail would be directly in the audience's face. I knew that my choices would have to be thoroughly and subtly thought out, right down to the lipstick colors and piece of jewelry.

Rahaleh had a strong role in the development of the character's looks. Part of my design process was going "shopping" with her in the late fall before I started sketching. We were able to pick out things that each of us thought was appropriate for the characters and talk about what the exact qualities of the garments were that made us think it would be appropriate as their costume. It was immensely helpful. For instance, we were able to decide that there would always be something "cracked" or "purposefully distressed" about Mia's costume. Mia's character was removed from the shocking home life of Henry and Martha, and unlike Hugh (who was also removed from the situation), Mia didn't have another family to rely on for emotional support. Her character was swept under the rug and left to fend on her own. Mia acted out because she wanted attention. It also made her feel like she had some kind of control in her life. All of these reasons lead me to think that Mia had a deliberately distressed and cracked quality to her clothes. Everything she wore had some kind of dyed or painted crack, as well as a designed tear or biker stitch that gave her an extra edge.

We also discovered Henry's quality through that trip. He needed to seem so worn down that his materials were extremely soft. Henry gives up a lot for Mia and especially Martha. He wants everyone to be happy and he talks about at the end how Martha has "sucked" the life out of him, and "all the blood" Martha has taken from him. All of his colors needed to look as though the vibrancy had been drained from them, and it was just a mere glow of what is, deep down, a strong, creative, and energetic young man. Before the divorce, Henry was full of life, but time and circumstance wore him down. This made thin, worn, and rough edges appropriate for Henry. His clothes were not deliberately distressed like Mia's. They were naturally and painfully worn thin.

Rahaleh and I talked about Izzy a on that trip as well. She needed to look sweet and innocent but still maintain a certain sex appeal. She was the most popular girl in school; she had to have the nicest and most expensive clothes but make it look like it was no effort. All the while she still had to have a façade of outward innocence. We talked about how Izzy used this "innocence" as a tool to keep from getting caught. It was hard to get a handle on Izzy at first. She uses power and manipulation to get what she wants without any thought of how it will affect others. She only ever thinks about how situations will affect her. Underneath all of this, though, is a very vulnerable and scared little girl. The only reason she acts the way she does is because she believes it will give her approval and acceptance among her peers. It was while I was thinking about that aspect of her character when I could see her in softer and more feminine fabrics and styles.

Hugh needed to look stylish, chic, and wealthy. He is happy in his new life and wants to be a better husband and father to his new family than he could be in his first. That said, I believe that he really he is helping to the best of his abilities when he comes back to London to get Martha help. Even though he doesn't live on the same continent as his first family, he does want what is best for them. He is strict and commanding, though. He is a man who is trying to make amends but is conflicted because he does not have the most gentle and caring disposition.

Since Hugh is happy in his new life and as a result of starting a new life with a younger woman, I saw him dressing a little bit younger than his age. That is where I had the idea for his first costume. I wanted him in a suit of some kind, but decided that he wouldn't wear a tie to make the look more youthful. Rahaleh and I also had a lot of discussion about how orderly and by the book Hugh's character is. I thought that a way to portray this through the clothes was by their quality, as well as through stripes. There was always something Hugh was wearing that had stripes.

For the most part, my research to rendering to shopping, fitting, and actual costume was relatively straightforward. Looking at the costumes as they were for performance, there are really only a few pieces here and there that changed either style or color. I believe that was because I worked so closely with my director from the beginning and was able to come up with some very specific looks. It was helpful that she wanted to be involved at such a level because it is such an intimate piece. Every detail made a statement, and having the person who would be working directly with the actors actively meeting and talking through the clothes made the rendering process go smoothly. The fact that the play took place in London was something that

I kept in mind throughout the process. It was helpful that we set the story in 2010 when styles are more international. As a result, I was able to shop in the DC area for clothing that could be in London. It was through the styling of the clothes (especially in Mia) that I could give the looks more of a London edge. I played with different sweaters and patterns on Henry as well, and put articles of clothing together that I wouldn't normally put together. This was a good exercise for designing down the road, because I believe the designs were made more interesting. It is a tool I will carry with me in the future.

I began shopping the show at the beginning of January. It was difficult to go out and find everything once the show was rendered. It was helpful, though, that I had such a clear idea of what each article of clothing needed to be. I was blessed with an open and responsive cast. Since it was a contemporary show, a lot of them wanted to keep some of their costumes, they liked them so much. My fittings with Eva Wilhelm, who played Martha, were beneficial for both her and I. We had long conversations about the costumes I was fitting on her. When I was fitting the cream robe that was built for her, I began explaining why I chose this particular fabric and style. When I explained that I felt like Martha was a modern day Blanche, she said to me, "Now I understand this character". It is always wonderful to have a level of interaction with an actor where the costume actually helps them understand and feel out the character. The fitting and idea of the costume was able to help Eva with the creation of her character.

This is the most rewarding part of costume designing for me: the collaboration with the director, designers, and actors all make the look of a show happen and come

to life. I personally do not mind hearing opinions of others. It is my job to listen, process, and filter what I'm hearing and be willing and able to work with others to create costumes that work for this production. Getting feedback like what Eva told me about Martha's robe was the highest compliment a costume designer could receive. It was a direct influence on the creation and understanding of a character, and it was evident in her performance that she thought about the costume and used it to portray Martha.

Overall, I did feel that the costumes achieved my goal of portraying disconnected characters. In this particular show, it was essential to suggest rather than tell who these characters were. I am proud of the production and all we achieved with it.

Research

1 a.) Mia Research

I wanted to find images that depicted Mia as edgy as well as giving the appearance that she was wealthy. I looked for pieces that looked rebellious and distressed. I was still playing with how classy or juvenile I wanted her to look, so I began with a variety of images for Mia. After showing these images to my director, we pushed her towards more subtle distressing as well as more variety of distressing. The only outfit of hers that was more wholesome was when she went to dinner with her father.

Initial Research for Mia:







Revised Research for Mia:









Revised Research for Mia (continued):









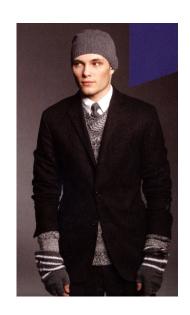
1 b.) Henry Research

Henry elected to stay home and care for their sick mother when Hugh left the family. He has been doing the job full time fore a year and a half now, and it has worn him down. He has a faded, rough, and worn quality in his clothes to reflect the situation he is in. I looked for trendy but artistic looking guys to influence my design for Henry. Martha has been teaching him art at home, and I wanted to showcase that in his look as well.

Initial Research for Henry:















1 c.) Martha Research

I looked to Yves Saint Laurent and Dior gowns and robes from 1999 and 2000 for Martha. Realistically, Hugh would have stopped giving her money for clothes about ten years ago. If he left five or six years previously, and the marriage was on the rocks for some time before that, I figured that most of Martha's dressing gowns would be about ten years old. She is a dramatic and over the top character at times, and I wanted to be able to give the actress the ability to seem over the top.

Initial Research for Martha:















1 d.) Izzy Research

Izzy needed to look as though she were innocent, but have a certain amount of sex appeal. She comes from a lot of money, but also needed to look effortless. I eventually found that a sexy and classic look was the best way to go with the look of this character. For the first scene Izzy wore sexy pajamas with a school uniform blazer. I gave her the only blazer as to set her apart from the other girls in that scene, because she is the one leading the hazing. She is also the oldest and as Mia puts it "age is like a rank".

Initial Izzy Research:

























1 e.) Hugh Research

Hugh, a London businessman living in Hong Kong, needed to look put together and expensive. He is all about the letter to the law and straight edged. This is why his pattern became stripes. Also, now that he has a younger wife and new family, the way he wore his clothes was a little more hip than a typical businessman. I wanted him to have no tie for the dinner with Mia.

Initial Research for Hugh:



















1 f.) Alice

Alice needed to look as though she had already been roughed up a little bit already. I also wanted to push how overweight the character was, so I designed the skirt a little too short for propriety, the shirt a little too tight to expose the belly, crumpled socks, and shoes that clash with the rest of her outfit. When Alice is in the hospital, she needed to look as if she was beaten like a war victim.

Initial Research for Alice:







Makeup Research for Alice:









Rough Sketches

These sketches were drawn for the preliminary design meetings. There were minor changes from the sketch to rendering process.

Mia:

These sketches show each costume for Mia's character. The first is while she is still at school, and the rest are after she's gone home. I changed a couple of things from the sketches to the renderings, most notably Mia's dinner dress. The first sketch was too frilly for her character. The final look was a lot simpler. Her school look had a school skirt and sweater. She did not get a blazer because she did not have the most status in that scene, Izzy did. She did wear a vest, though, as a second in command. Items such as her jackets were added in the final renderings.



Mia Opening





This was an initial sketch of the dress Mia was going to wear for dinner with Hugh. It was revised later to a simpler design, as we felt the original had too many elements on the dress. It got shorter, had no pattern, and lost all the frills.



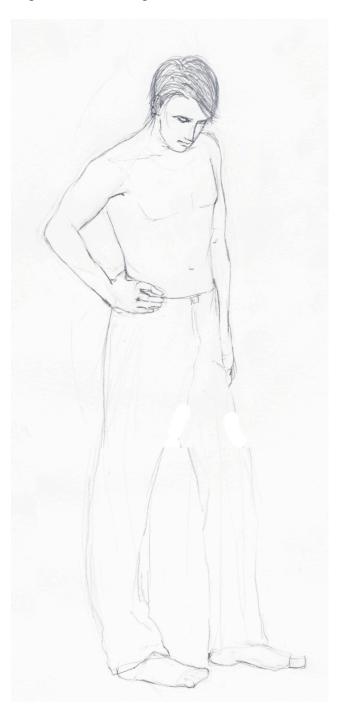
This was the revised design for Mia's dress for dinner:





Henry:

Henry had two looks in the show. He originally was going to begin the show in pajamas and then he had one outfit for the rest of the show. That changed during tech week. Instead of pajamas, he wore underwear. The hope at that moment of the show was to portray how incestuous Martha and Henry's relationship was. Henry's jacket was added to the design in the rendering.



Henry In Bed

Henry originally was going to be in a yellow sweater. We realized that he needed to be in a t-shirt and the sweater would be too difficult to take off in the middle of the scene, or even in the scene change. The final sketch shows Henry in his t-shirt.







Martha:

Martha had the grandest looks in the show. We never see her outside of the bedroom, and I liked the idea that we see a lot of Martha's different robes. We are only seeing part of her plethora of robes that she's kept for all of these years. The second robe was built for her. I wanted her to have long and flowing sleeves in that scene. It was a particularly dramatic scene. It was also important that all of her robes lead up to the final dress. Her colors started out in more pastel pinks and then moved to a darker pink pattern, and then finally her last gown. It needed to be grand and regal but also look as if it had seen better days.





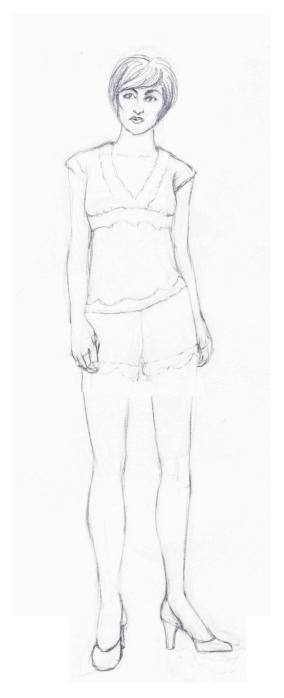
Martha Biting



Martha Final Scene

Izzy:

Izzy's sketch had a lot more pieces in her costume than the final rendering. Some of this had to do with the fact that the actress who was cast would look better in different pieces than the original sketch. Even from rendering to actual costume, her outfit changed once again to accommodate the actress's needs. I wanted Izzy to be in a blazer for that scene to show that she had the most status among the three girls. Her school blazer was added in the final rendering for her school look and is not depicted in this drawing.



1zzy Opening



Hugh:

Hugh was very consistent from sketch into rendering. His jacket was added once rendered. The actor who was cast in this role was 6'6", and was willing to let us use some of his clothes. The jacket we ended up using in the show was greener than I had originally designed, but I still felt that it looked expensive. It was nice to have some more color onstage at the end.





Alice:

Alice remained consistent throughout the sketch and rendering process. She only had the school girl skirt in the first scene. Alice had the lowest ranking, as she was the youngest one. In the sketch she had a tie, which was eventually cut in the hopes that it would truly keep her the lowest ranked one in the scene. I used research (shown earlier) to depict her hospital gown.



Alice Opening

Final Renderings

There were minor adjustments to the actual garments once the drawings were painted. There were accessories that were either added or subtracted from sketch to rendering. I included my research (as well as even more revised research) on the actual renderings as well.

Mia:











Henry:











Henry Hospital Studio Theatre

Martha:







Martha Final Scene Studio Theatre

Izzy:





Hugh:





Alice:



Costume Plot/Piece List

Part 1:

That FaceBy: P. Stenham

Designer: KLH
Costume Plot
UPDATED:
1/18/10

1/18/10 Character	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4
	Dorm Room	Martha's Flat	Hospital Room	Martha's Flat, Henry's Room
	Domi Noom	Long pink silk nightie *CHANGES INTO* pink silk dressing gown with shoulder pads and butterfly clip at	nospital Room	Cream dressing
Martha		the waist, cream slippers		accents, cream slippers
	White button-		Black leather jacket, cream shirt with	
	down, maroon sweater vest,	Black leather	cracked design, light	
	black tie, maroon plaid uniform skirt, black leggings, black boots	jacket, cream shirt with cracked design, light grey distressed jeans,	grey distressed jeans, black belt, black low-heel	
	with buckles, studded bracelet, link	black belt, black low-heel boots, studded bracelet,	boots, studded bracelet, link	
Mia	bracelet	link bracelet Blue pajama pants, darker blue socks	bracelet	
		(Martha removes these onstage) *CHANGES INTO* Yellow t- shirt with artistic	Yellow t-shirt with artistic design, blue jeans, brown	
		design, blue jeans, brown belt, brown worn shoes, charcoal jacket, tan and white scarf, black	belt, brown worn shoes, charcoal jacket, tan and white scarf, black	Enters in a towel, love bite on neck, puts on Martha's other dressing
Henry		knit hat	knit hat	gown
Hugh				

copper/tan flowy low-cut blouse, dark skinny jeans, Tan silk tank gold long necklace, gold and silver bracelets, tiffany bracelet, tan high heeled shoes (may need to be flats)

with lace/matching shorts, tiffany charm bracelet, maroon uniform blazer, gold pin, gold earring, pink fuzzy slippers white shortsleeve ruffle button-down, flesh-colored bra, maroon uniform plaid skirt, white knee-highs with black stripe, brown shoes, black knit hat

Hospital Gown, bandages

Turquoise cardigan,

> *He enters the scene, exiting from the shower. Scene with Henry's shredded clothes, and he holds up one of Martha's dressing gowns. Martha bites him on the neck

Notes:

Izzy

Alice

Part 2:

That FaceBy: P. Stenham

Designer: KLH Costume Plot

Character	Scene 5	Scene 6 Martha's Flat,	Scene 7	Scene 8 Martha's Flat,
Martha	Hugh's Flat	Cream dressing gown with pink accents, has been drinking, more disheveled	Restaurant	Henry's Room Cranberry evening gown, "diamond" necklace, jeweled rings, red nail polish, crazy hair, MAKEUP: Big red lips, blue eye shadow
Mia	Black leather jacket, cream shirt with cracked design, light grey distressed jeans, black belt, black lowheel boots, studded bracelet, link bracelet (has had a night of drinking)		Black military coat with flowy skirt, *REMOVES COAT* grey jersey jumper, grey shirt, crazy knit tights, studded bracelet and chain bracelet, another cuffed silver leather bracelet, studded flats, black headband	Black leather jacket, purple paid short sleeve shirt, charcoal jeans with thread design, black low-heel boots, studded bracelet, chain bracelet, hair more pulled back
Henry	Yellow t-shirt with artistic design, blue jeans, brown belt, brown worn shoes, charcoal jacket, tan and white scarf, black knit hat	Yellow t-shirt with artistic design, blue jeans, brown belt, brown worn shoes, charcoal jacket, tan and white scarf, black knit hat		Martha's cream and pink dressing gown (over his clothes from before?)

Grey suit with grey stripe, lavender button-down shirt, wedding band, black shoes (cufflinks???)

Striped Buttondown shirt, khaki pants, tan car/trench coat, brown belt, brown shoes, wallet or billfold

Hugh

A bedroom sheet, pink ruffled underwear, bra if needed, puts on Henry's jacket

Izzy

Alice

Notes:

*Izzy's clothes are strewn about the room; need a bra *There is a line that indicates that her dressing gown is white/cream *Martha is adding jewels as she talks, Henry is trying to put on her shoes and cardigan

Fitting Photos

Mia: This is her first and second round of fitting photos for her first look, when the girls are hazing Alice.





Mia: This is both Mia's look for coming home as well as going to dinner with Hugh:





Henry: Here are the first and second rounds of fitting photos for Henry. His costumes changed a lot during tech rehearsal, and the changes are represented in the production photos. Henry was originally going to wear pajamas as his first costume. We changed it to underwear during tech week.





Henry: This is his first round of fittings for his second costume and jacket:





Henry: I refit him into a different pair of jeans. The shirt is his own and not a part of his costume.



Henry: These were the first options for the robe Henry wears that is supposed to belong to Martha.





Henry: This was an original option for Henry's nightgown for the end of the show. The actual costume was bought and then altered to hide the pee belt underneath.



Martha: This was her original option for her first robe. We eventually changed it during tech week.





Martha: This was the robe that was made for her. Here is the fabric swatch with the final product.



Martha: This gown was purchased and then altered to look like the design.



Izzy: I ran into some difficulty shopping for Izzy's costumes. The actress had different proportions than I had anticipated and I had to alter the design slightly to accommodate the actress.





Izzy:





Hugh: Hugh was pretty straightforward. There were only minor changes (such as the color of his first shirt) from fitting to production.





Alice: The fit for Alice's first costume was a major part of her design. She needed to look awkward and I tightened the fit of her clothes to make the actress look heavier than she was.





Alice: Alice needed to look as though she were a war victim. I taught the actress and wardrobe crew how to use makeup to create black eyes, scratches, and bruises.



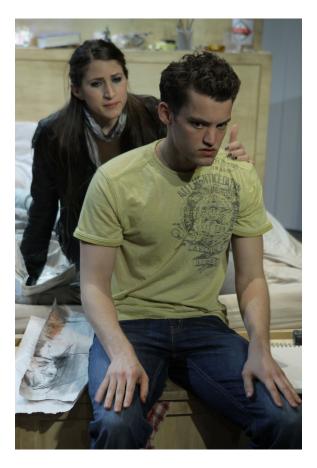


Production Photos

























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