

Abstract

Title of Thesis:

THE MAN IN THE BACKSEAT: A
REFLECTION ON THE
PROJECTION DESIGN PROCESS
OF HOOKMAN

A PRODUCTION BY THE UMD
SCHOOL FOR THEATRE DANCE
AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES
-COLLEGE PARK, CLARICE SMITH
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER'S
KOGOD THEATRE

Sean Preston, Master of Fine Arts,
2022

Thesis Directed By:

Nathaniel P. Claridad, Guest Director

The following thesis navigates the artistic ideas and concepts, design process, and execution of Sean Preston's projection design for the UMD School for Theatre Dance and Performance Studies-College Park's production of *Hookman*. The production opened November 13th, 2021 in the Kogod Theatre at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. *Hookman* was directed by Nathaniel P. Claridad, with scenic design by Mollie Singer, costume design by Stephanie Parks, lighting design by Heather Reynolds, and sound design by Tosin Olufolabi.

THE MAN IN THE BACKSEAT: A REFLECTION ON THE
PROJECTION DESIGN PROCESS OF *HOOKMAN*

A PRODUCTION BY THE UMD SCHOOL FOR THEATRE DANCE
AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES-COLLEGE PARK, CLARICE
SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER'S KOGOD THEATRE

by

Sean Preston

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
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Advisory Committee:

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Dedication

For my partner who has pushed me to become the artist I am and Monster Energy for keeping me awake enough to do so.

Acknowledgements

I would like to give a great thanks to the team of artists and creators that I worked with to make this show become a reality.

Nathaniel P. Claridad- Director

Mollie Singer- Scenic Designer

Heather Reynolds- Lighting Designer

Tosin Olufolabi- Sound Designer

Stephanie Parks- Costume designer

Andres Poch- Assistant Media designer

Kate Wander- Stage Manager

I would also like to give a huge thank you to the faculty that have guided me over the past 3 years and encouraged me to be the artist I have become today.

Jared Mezzocchi

Andrew Cissna

Helen Huang

Marielis Garcia

Misha Kachman

Susan O'Neill

Andrew Cohen

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Introduction

When I first learned that I was designing the projections for *Hookman* by playwright Lauren Yee, I was excited for many reasons, but primarily because it was a play written only five years ago. In my three years at the University of Maryland, I have loved working on new work. I have, almost exclusively, been able to design for shows that were either devised or were less than a decade old. Because new shows tend to lack cultural familiarity, the creative team can discover what a show needs without competing with prior conceptions of the show.

Another reason for my excitement was that this was my first in-person show since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. In the spring semester of my first year of graduate school the world was hit by a global pandemic that effectively halted all in-person theatrical performances for two years. It was impossible to know how long the pandemic was going to last and what theatre would look like when it was over. Even as I am writing this, the pandemic still hasn't fully subsided. Fortunately, it has reduced enough in severity for us to start re-discovering in-person events. During those two years I spent many hours exploring the world around me. I started going on weekly hikes in the nearby mountains and parks. In nature I felt an inherent ability to affect the space around me, whether that was picking up a rock or splashing in a river. I felt like I had an influence and impact on the world, and it had an impact on me. Artistically, I was drawn to that same feeling of impact and influence within space. I want to answer

the question of how media can influence performers in a space and how the performers can influence the media.

Seven months prior to *Hookman*'s opening, I got my first chance to answer that question. I designed the projections for a filmed dance piece called *Subject to Change*, choreographed by Marielis Garcia. I got the opportunity to see how my explorations into spatial relationships worked in a performance setting. It was inspiring to see how my projections of an abstracted oak tree or icy lake influenced the dancer's movements and my fellow designers' decisions. Coming out of that experience I learned a great deal about how my projections could affect space, and how to effectively communicate to the rest of the design team. In terms of projections, I saw how something as simple as a circle on the floor could be used to draw focus and contain the space. I saw how icy snowflakes on the translucent surface of the set could create a feeling of depth and expansion within the space. Some of the best lessons were learned in my collaboration with the design team. We were able to keep open and flowing communication that allowed the various elements of lights, projections, scenery, and costumes to blend into the seamless world of the piece. Going into *Hookman*, I was able to take these lessons in communications and space to lay the groundwork for the world of that show.

In this paper, I am going to go through the process of how I worked with a director and my fellow designers to create the show of *Hookman*. The creative team for this production consisted of six people, including myself. The director was Nathaniel P. Claridad, the lighting designer was Heather Reynolds, the

scenic designer was Mollie Singer, the Sound Designer was Tosin Olufolabi, and the costume designer was Stephanie Parks. As a team, we worked together to create a design that would fit the story and the vision Nathaniel had for it.

The process began with the whole team reading the script. In this stage of the design, I had begun formulating initial responses and responded heavily to the comedic nature of the show. Next, we all met for the first time at the concept meeting. All of the designers shared their initial thoughts. After, Nathaniel shared with us his vision of the show and what he thought the driving forces behind the show were. From here I began the research phase of the design process. It is at this time that my initial impulses mixed with the director's vision to create my first offering of what the media wanted to explore. The research evolved throughout the process, as did my ideas and offerings as my understanding of the show changed. About a month after the first research meeting we were presented with an updated script. While many of the core elements of the show were the same, it clarified many aspects of the story. For example, the car crash and the importance of Lexi's mental state to the overall narrative changed with the updated script. Shortly after the script change, Nathaniel came to the team with an idea that the opening page of the show would be fully filmed and projected on the set. From here, I planned the film shoot. With the help of the whole creative team, we filmed the opening and ending pages of the script. After filming was complete, I started working on the paperwork leading up to the show. This time was primarily focused on creating the draftings of the projectors, creating my cue sheet, and making the content creation list. With all of the preparation complete,

we entered tech week. This is when the design elements came together for the first time. During this week and a half we all worked closely together to build and construct what the audience would finally see. In this time, we hit several hurdles. We underestimated the transition length, which led us to restaging and rebuilding many of the transition moments. During this week, the design team was made aware that the story of sexual assault became a driving force of the show in the rehearsal process. This was a difficult hurdle in communication, as we had been tracking the show through the lens of Lexi's grief and not Lexi's assault. Within this process the media's role was to tell the story of the main character, Lexi's, declining mental health after she caused the death of her best friend in a horrific car accident. Over the next 11 chapters, I will explain how each step in the design process built towards this final concept.

Chapter 1-First Read

When working on a play, the first read through of the script is the most important one. The first read through is the closest I can get to experiencing the show as an audience member, since it is my first exposure to the work. It allows me to gauge what I think the story is about and how it makes me feel. My initial impulses helped to guide my first conversations with the director. These were the first steps I took towards developing the media concept of using projections to track the decline in Lexi's mental health. In this chapter, I will start with a brief summary of the script. I will then explain my initial responses and what media ideas came from those.

Hookman begins with two girls, Lexi and Jess, driving to the movie theater for a midnight showing of a film. As they arrive at the theater the shadowy figure of Hookman, a murderer from 1980s American horror fiction, springs up from the backseat and kills Jess. It isn't until the end of the show that we learn the "murder" was actually a metaphor for Lexi getting into a car accident that caused Jess's death. The next time we see Lexi, she is back at her dorm room with her roommate, Yoonji. She attempts to seem unfazed by the accident, but it is destroying her mental health. In this scene, we also learn that Hookman has followed her back to college. He left a bloody knife with a note stuck in Lexi's pillow. Throughout the show these types of horror tropes, "Bloody knife with a note" or "bloody handprint on a mirror" are repeated. In a typical horror movie these would be terrifying. In *Hookman*, these tropes are played as jokes and

references to the horror slasher genre from the late 90's. The next day, Lexi has a Facetime call with her boyfriend, Sean, where she confronts him about him raping her. The conversation does not go well, as Sean refuses to take any accountability for his actions. This triggers our first return to the night of the crash. We are seemingly back in the car with Jess and Lexi, only this time Lexi opens up to Jess about her rape. As the scene progresses Lexi frantically tries to prevent the car from reaching the crash, but she can't prevent what has already happened. She is forced to relive that moment again. The next scene returns us to the dormroom where Lexi talks with Yoonji about returning home for Jess's funeral, but is unsure if she should. With Yoonji's encouragement, she decides she will return home. Yoonji then gets drunk and accidentally takes Lexi's phone and jacket before leaving to go on a date. Lexi, knowing that Hookman is still out there, follows after Yoonji in an attempt to save her. She never makes it and Yoonji, being mistaken for Lexi, gets her face ripped off by Hookman. After this, Lexi returns home for Jess's funeral. She arrives late and is met with a girl tending the auditorium door named Kayleigh. In their conversation, Kayleigh calls Lexi a killer. This forces Lexi to confront what she did to Jess. In the final scene of the show we are back in the car with Jess and Lexi. This time, Lexi comes to the realization that she ran the red light. Jess holds her hand and makes Lexi look at her as she dies. It is then that Jess is replaced by Hookman. They have a short fight, ending with Lexi and Hookman sitting in the car as Lexi calls Jess's mom to explain what actually happened that night.

My initial impulses had me leaning heavily into the comedic aspects of the show. The jokes seemed well timed, making me feel like I was reading a comedy satire of the 1990s slasher genre, until I read the last three pages. This is where I learned Hookman was the embodiment of Lexi's guilt and grief. With this discovery the whole show tries to snap into focus. For me, it didn't. The constant jokes set up an expectation of comedy that was shattered in the last three pages. While the ending was very powerful, it left me confused as to how we had gotten there.

As I started thinking about the media, I had visions of the projections being used to create and accentuate the comedic moments. I had these thoughts of Quentin Tarantino levels of blood effects being projected. Reflecting on this moment, I realized I was searching for actions that drove the story forward. After my initial read through, what stood out to me the most were the comedic moments and the killing. I initially wanted the jokes to be the place where the media would live and thrive. In reality, the jokes did not need support. I started to realize that I was telling Lexi's internal story. These bloody comedic moments became harder to rationalize as triggers for the media, and even became a barrier for moving forward. They were my initial impulses and I had a connection to these ideas that I felt was important for the media to portray. The issue was that as long as I was focused on how to add blood to a scene, I was not focusing on what drove the blood to be there in the first place. This focus on blood as an accessory made it difficult to come up with new ideas. I had to set my initial

impulses to the side for a while to free up space in my head for new ways of thinking about the show. Once I was able to do that, I was able to move forward.

In summation, this first read through gave me a few insights on the show. First was that it was a funny show with a good pacing to its jokes. Second was that Hookman was an embodiment of grief. Third, I had a fascination with the importance of blood. These first takeaways led me to thinking about how blood could be used within the spaces and how media could accentuate the comedy. While I had understood Hookman's role within the script, I had not yet connected it to a media presence. That clarity would come over the following weeks as I learned more about the director Nathaniel P. Claridad's vision of the show.

Chapter 2- Concept Meeting

The concept meeting is the first time the creative team gets to share what they thought about the show. This was the first time I got to hear my fellow designers' impulses. It's also the first time the director shares what they believe the driving forces of the play are to the designers. The concept meeting is where the foundation of my design was built. It is in this meeting that Nathaniel shared with us the driving force of the play, which was the grief and pain of the main character, Lexi. My first read through had my design ideas locked onto the comedy of the piece. With Nathaniel's added guidance, I realized that the media's goal had to relate to grief and Lexi's internal space. Within the following chapter, I will share with you the designer's initial thoughts, Nathaniel's vision for the show, and how both of those impacted my understanding of the show.

The meeting started with the designers sharing their initial thoughts. I commented on how funny I thought the piece was and how hard the ending hit me. Heather Reynolds, the lighting designer, made a wonderful connection to how mourning in the play is treated similarly to mourning in the book *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Stephanie Parks, the costume designer, mentioned that time is treated uniquely and how it feels like a look at what happens when fear consumes us and alters our reality. Visualizing time and the way fear can alter our understanding of the world had been large influences; but seemed particularly poignant as I moved into the research phase of the production.

Now it was Nathaniel's turn to speak. He introduced himself and dove right into his vision of the show. He mentioned that while the show was funny and

violent, it is a story about grief and loss. In the modern day pandemic, the audience would all be able to relate because of all the varying degrees of trauma we've experienced by the world around us. He continued on to say that *Hookman* is a memory play, but unlike the play *The Glass Menagerie*, Lexi is unaware she is the narrator. Nathaniel elaborated that he was interested in putting the audience inside Lexi's brainspace and seeing the show from her point of view. At the end of the presentation, he elaborated that the play is heavily informed by horror movies like *Scream* and *Urban Legend* from the late 90s. Nathaniel was drawn to how these movies were not horrifying, but had a sense of fun within them. These initial ideas were the foundation of my concept of using media to tell the story of Lexi's declining mental health.

In this first meeting, but also throughout the whole process, I was struck by how happy he was when talking about the show. It is so easy for creators to get wrapped up in the seriousness of a piece. It was nice to see a director that was smiling and making jokes through the whole process. It definitely brought the room together and primed our collaboration as one filled with jokes and laughter. I want more collaborations that make me smile as much as I did while working on this show.

There were several major takeaways from his explanation of the show. The first and most important: while the show is funny, it is primarily a story about grief, guilt, and having to come to terms with those concepts at such a young age. These were the guideposts that framed my design and led me to using media to tell the story of Lexi's declining mental state. How does Lexi cope with

her guilt and how can projections work to manifest that guilt and pain into the world around her? The other major takeaway was to treat the play as a memory play where Lexi is an unreliable and unknowing narrator up until the last few pages. For me, exploring memory and memory plays required an exploration into time and the perception of it. These ideas, alongside Stephanie's comment about what happens when fear alters our reality, encouraged me to look deeply into the motifs of time, grief, and guilt during the research process.

Chapter 3- Research

At this point in the design process, I had not yet developed the concept of media being used to tell the story of Lexi's declining mental health. The research phase is what gave me the building blocks that allowed me to create that concept. Over the course of this chapter I am going to share with you the process of my research and how it influenced the creation of the media concept.

For *Hookman*, I started by looking at the major themes that came up in the concept meeting: guilt, grief, time, and blood. When analyzing these concepts there was a moment in the script that stood out to me, which was the car crash scene. The play felt like we were suspended in the moments before the crash. The play ends with Lexi realizing it was her crashing the car and not Hookman that killed Jess. I wanted to explore how Lexi avoided confronting that truth. She is always standing right on the brink of a mental breakdown, but is frozen. I wanted the media to capture that. For research, my first impulse was to look at time and how it can be presented. I landed on this idea of a car clock frozen at 11:59, one minute before the crash (photo 3.1). I was interested in seeing where we could place this number in Lexi's world as a constant reminder of the crash that eats away at her until she finally faces it.

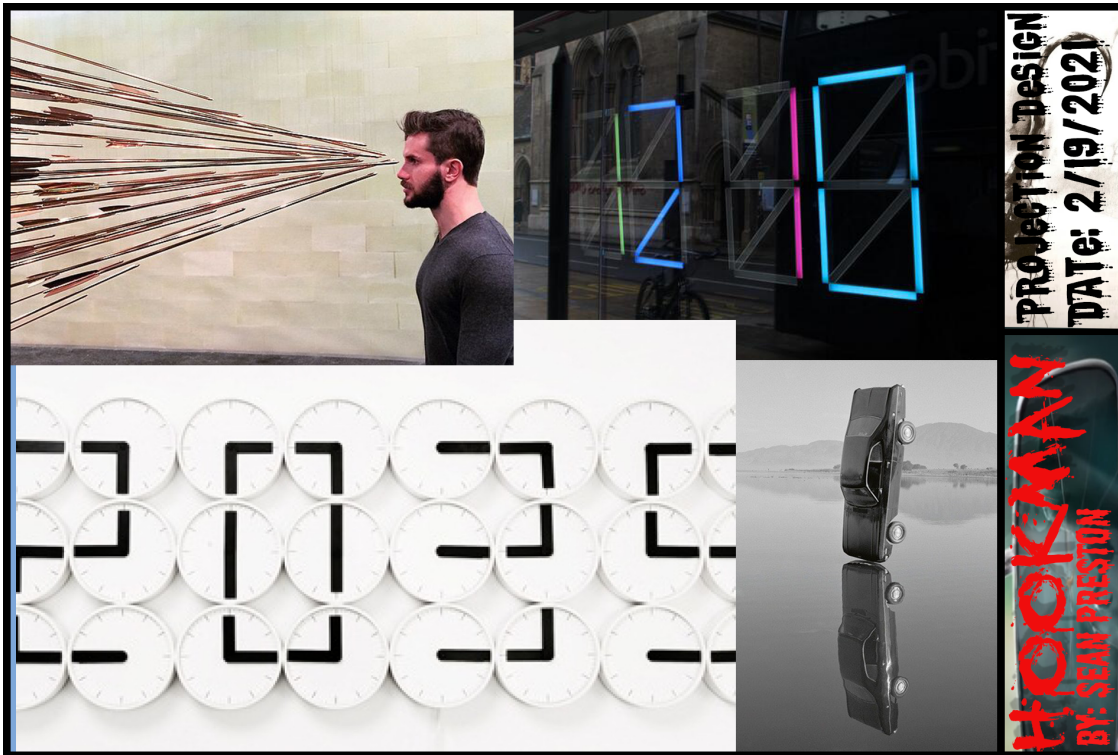


Photo 3.1: Research Relating to Time and the Moment Before Impact

Another important part of my research focused around Lexi's mental state. Lexi is dealing with a lot of trauma. Not only is she the cause of her best friend's death, she also had been raped by her boyfriend just days prior to that. I knew that if she was the narrator of this story, I needed to get a grasp of how she views herself and how abuse can change one's perspective of the world around them. I started with how Lexi viewed herself. She felt like someone who is out of sync. There is an overload of emotions on the inside, and by suppressing them she is only causing herself to slowly deteriorate(photo 3.2). I also dove into how she views the world around her, specifically how she views her rapist, Sean. In a Facetime call, she tries to work through what he did to her and see if he feels any guilt or remorse. Her concerns are completely dismissed and met with gaslighting. I wanted a projection of Sean to slowly transform into the monster that she starts seeing him as(photo 3.3).



Photo 3.2: Research About Lexi's Self Image



Photo 3.3: Research Exploring Lexi's Perception of Sean

The final piece of my initial research revolved around blood and how blood could exist in space. After researching the other topics, I had started to develop

my concept of using media to track Lexi's declining mental health. I wasn't sure how blood fit into that story. I knew I needed to research it, because it was one of my first impulses for what projections could be used for. I had this feeling that it was important, and that projecting blood would fit somewhere into the show. Looking at photo 3.4, I was trying to find the beauty and potential of blood. Could it be replaced by flowers, how would it look in the snow, or what beauty is there in it just by itself? Looking back, at this stage in



Photo 3.4: Research About Blood

the design, I was viewing blood as something that existed as an accessory to the space and not something conjured by the actions in the space. Though I did not have a place in my concept for this specific research, I kept it in because I knew it was going to be important. I'm glad I did this, because I found two moments

where the actions of the characters allowed for blood. The first is when Hookman murders Jess and the second is when Hookman attempts to murder Lexi's roommate, Yoonji. In both instances, I found that the violence required a response from the space.

I view research as a continual process. Whenever I feel stuck in a design or a new idea is introduced, I will revisit and revise it. By actively returning to it, I am able to look at what the initial driving forces of my design were and assess if those are still the same. If they are not then, I research the new ideas. By doing this cycle of creating and revisiting research, I am able to keep myself aligned with the goals of the show. In regards to *Hookman* I needed to go back, reassess, and recreate my research in the two months leading up to tech. One reason for this was that we had just returned from summer break and I was feeling lost on how to complete my design. Over the summer I had focused on planning the film shoot and making sure that it would run smoothly. The creative team had also not met in three months, and those meetings had been integral to keeping my brain on track and moving towards the final design. When I returned to campus, I did not feel like I had fully pinned down what the content needed to do to support the story I was telling. I went back and did more research. It allowed me to revisit the old ideas that were no longer relevant, such as the buildup to the crash. I discovered new ideas surrounding glass shattering and distortion of landscape to take their place. That final round of research let me re-center and re-evaluate where I was, and it made sure I knew what I was going to do as the production moved forward.

During the concept meeting Nathaniel made a statement I want to reiterate. The show is about grief, guilt, and how to come to terms with those concepts. This phrase is what drove my initial research and my search for what the media's role in the show would be. Over multiple months, the research became refined and it helped me to refine my idea of what the show was about. When looking at each research plate at the end of the process it's incredible to see exactly how the design developed. Even from the first research plates, there was a desire to explore Lexi's mental health. The explorations into time and collision helped me realize how important the perception of an event is. A singular moment in time can be stretched and slowed to show its impact on Lexi. The research into Lexi's mental health gave me an understanding of her as a person. I got to understand the effect her pain and trauma had on her. By understanding how overwhelming it was for Lexi to keep all her emotions bottled up, I was able to portray what happened in the moments where she wasn't able to keep those emotions contained.

Chapter 3-1 Continued Research



Photo 3-1.1: Research About Rain and Roads



Photo 3-1.2: Research about Windows Shattering

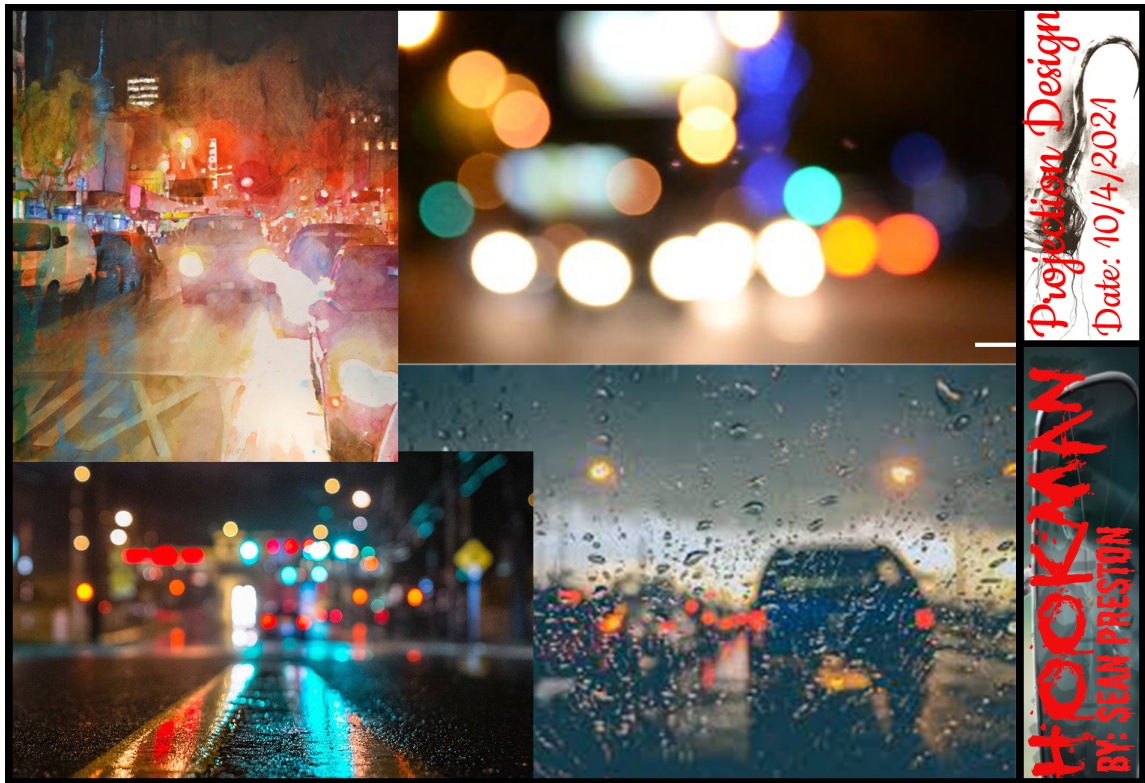


Photo 3-1.3: Later Research on Rain and Roads



Photo 3-1.4: Research on Cracks and Shattering



Photo 3-1.5: Research on Distortion of Light and Roads

Chapter 4- New Script

A little over a month into the design process, we learned we did not have the correct script for the show. After reading the updated script, the media concept started to become clear. In this chapter I am going to lay out how the script changed the first scene, how this affected my understanding of the show, and the impact that it had on my design.

The original script we had been working with was Lauren Yee's manuscript of the show. This was not the published version. When a script change happens, it can be a stressful moment for everyone in the process. The changes can drastically alter or make whole design concepts not viable. Luckily for us, this change happened early in the process. We had just created our preliminary designs and had three weeks to make any adjustments.

The most important script change was at the start of the show. Jess is no longer murdered by Hookman when they arrive at the theatre. Instead, we see Lexi drop her milkshake and distractedly reach for it on the ground as Jess yells for her to watch out. This made the car crash a clear event from the beginning of the show instead of a reveal at the end of it.

Lauren Yee completely shifted the narrative structure by changing how Jess died in the first scene. In the original script, we are introduced to Hookman as a real person and later learn that he is a metaphor and coping mechanism for the crash. In the published script, we see the crash first and then later discover that Hookman is a metaphor. This one switch had a rippling effect across the whole script. Notably, the second and third car scenes became a clear metaphor

for Lexi's internal space as she tries to cope with causing her best friend's death. This same change also allows us to see Yoonji's attempted murder by Hookman was actually her being sexually assaulted while drunk.

As my understanding of the show shifted, so did my ideas around the design. I discovered that each location served a different purpose. The car represented Lexi's internal space. In the first scene it is a real place, but every time we return it is in the form of a memory. That memory would become more and more distorted as we progress through the story to portray her decaying mental health. The dorm room represented the real world. This is where we see the face that Lexi is putting on for the world to hide her emotions. In these scenes the media was going to project different scenic elements, like posters or tapestries. I was going to have those interact with the scenes by falling off the wall or changing their content in response to Lexi's mental state. The goal was to show, in subtle ways, how her emotional state was bleeding into the world around her. Finally, the outdoor scenes are where those two worlds blend. The trauma Lexi has experienced materializes into the world in front of us as we see Hookman murder Lexi's roommate, Yoonji.

Due to Lauren Yee's rewrite of the first scene, I was able to have a clearer picture of the emotional journey that Lexi goes through in the story. With this new understanding of the show, I was able to better visualize the design. It became apparent that the media's role in this show was to track Lexi's declining mental health.

Chapter 5- The Film Shoot

Shortly after we got the new script, Nathaniel introduced the filming idea. Over the course of planning the shoot, I saw that the film fulfilled two roles in the show. The first was to foreshadow the crash happening later in the scene, and that the whole play was taking place within the film, *Hookman*. Throughout this chapter we will walk through the film's conception, planning, and execution.

The conception of the film began as a response to the finalized script. Nathaniel shared that the new script felt more grounded and less ambiguous than the previous manuscript. This led him to propose leaning into the movie aspect of the show, and present the opening as a film. I thought this idea was fascinating and an interesting way to bring the audience into the world of the play. I immediately started doing research into how the film might look (photo 5.1). I wanted to keep the horror movie feeling in mind. In my research, I noticed that many slasher films started with long establishing shots and have an eerie bluish-green color tone. I wanted to make sure I kept those elements of the genre intact. The film would not show anything graphic, so it was important to convey the horror genre through other means.

Nathaniel shared with us his vision of how the film would be presented. He wanted the audience to enter the space as if they were people who had come to see the film, *Hookman*, at a college movie night. An RA would welcome them to the space and then the lights would go down. The movie *Hookman* would start playing on the back wall of the set. The film would last for the first page of the script. The car would then roll onto the stage at the same time Lexi turns out into

traffic, almost causing an accident. To bookend this idea, we filmed the last page of Lexi and Hookman driving into the sunset and then rolling credits.



Photo 5.1: Research On In Car Camera Angles

A film shoot requires the assistance and input of everyone on the design team to ensure all needed elements are ready by the date of the shoot. I started by writing down every moment in the script that needed to be filmed and what was needed for each of those shots. This included scenic elements like the car, what costumes were needed for each shot, if lighting was needed, and if we needed to record their voices. By making this document, we were able to start setting dates for the film shoots and my fellow designers were able to start planning for these film shoots(photos 5.2-4). One important discovery that came from this document was the need for one film shoot to happen over a month after the first one. Hookman's jacket was an integral part of his costume, and since it wouldn't be finished until late October, we had to push this part of filming back.

Hookman Filming Needs

Currently there are three parts that need to be filmed.

1. Opening page
2. Lexi putting on her jacket to chase after Yoonji
3. The last scene with Lexi and Hookman in the car

Opening page needs

*we will want to film this earlier, probably as close to the start of the semester as is feasible

* shots will be pretty close up, maybe top of thighs.

Costumes

- Lexi
- Jess

Scenic

- Car
- hose with access to water
- adjustable nozzle for the hose

Lights

- defer to Heather Reynolds

Sound

- Defer to Tosin Olufalabi

Projections

- One projector
- a screen to project on
- computer with isadora

Film

- Camera
- tripod
- sd cards
- external hard drive

Photo 5.2: Page 1/3 of Hookman Filming Needs

Lexi Putting on Layers(Scene6)

*This can be filmed closer to tech since its pretty simple

*Shot is waist up

Costumes

-Lexi

Lights

-basic front light, can defer to Heather if there is a stronger lighting idea for that moment.

Film

-Camera

-Tripod

-Black Backdrop

Sound

Not needed

Scenic

Not needed

Projections

Not Needed

Photo 5.3: Page 2/3 of Hookman Filming Needs

Final Moment

*I would like to film this at least two weeks before tech, can be a week before if the time is needed for completing the Hookman costume

*Shots should be waist and up, top of thighs at lowest.

Costumes

-Lexi

-Hookman

Scenic

-Car(different from the first car)

Lights

-defer to Heather Reynolds

Sound

Not needed

Projections

-One projector

-a screen to project on

-computer with isadora

Film

-Camera

-tripod

-sd cards

-external hard drive

Photo 5.4: Page 3/3 of Hookman Filming Needs

Hookman Filming Equipment Request Sheet

- Clarice
 - 1 color calibrated monitor
 - 2 micro sdi to hdmi converters
 - 1 capture device
 - 1 device to load luts
 - 1 go pro
 - 1 tripod for gopro
 - 2 computers to run zoom and Isadora from
 - 1 Rp screen
 - 1 external hard drive for storage and backup
 - 1 popup tent to cover the projector
 - 3 tarp walls to attach to the tent
 - 1 ipad loaded with zoom

- Brinn/tdps
 - 1 3k or 6k projector(whatever is available)
 - 1 1.0 lenses (whatever is available)
 - 1 sony fx3 camera
 - 1 lens kit including 38, 50, and 75mm lenses
 - 1 tripod and jib arm
 - 2 64gb high speed sd cards
 - 2 64gb micro sd cards with adaptor to regular sd

Photo 5.5: Hookman Filming Equipment Request Sheet

The next step in this process was to figure out how the film would be shot. Traditionally, one would draw storyboards to depict every shot. I chose to use a different strategy. While doing research, I had a variety of car scenes pulled up on Youtube. It dawned on me to use those videos to build my storyboards. I did

not need to draw each image. I needed to find a film that used the camera angle I wanted and then screenshot it. This strategy made the storyboarding process go by smoothly. I dove into dozens of clips from various films. I was able to pull all the images I needed to create the storyboard that would guide this film shoot (photos 5.6-10). With the storyboards built, I was able to task one of my assistants, Mark Williams, to scout out all the shots on a real car. By doing this, we were able to confirm we had the tools to do the film shoot. It also informed us ahead of the shoot exactly what lenses we needed to have. With the storyboards in place, I was ready to start figuring out the specifics of the shoot.

Story board of car scene(Rough new idea)



Establishing shot



wanna know something weird?

Photo 5.6: Storyboard 1/5 Credit- Top:Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard(2021) Bottom: True Detective (S01 E01)



Which way should I go?



I think you can go either way

***Photo 5.7: Storyboard 2/5 Credits- Top:True Detective (S01 E01) Bottom:
Prisoners(2013)***



did I ask for ketchup?

Yeah, it's right theres

Oh Ok



Which way?

What?

Photo 5.8: Storyboard 3/5 Credit- Top: Prisoners(2013) Bottom: Prisoners(2013)



Car headlights pull up behind



Jess can I go?

Photo 5.9: Storyboard 4/5 Credit- Top: Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard(2021) Bottom: Prisoners(2013)



I don't, um



AAAAAH, I'm just gonna go

Photo 5.10: Storyboard 5/5 Credits- Top: Prisoners(2013) Bottom: True Detective (S01 E01)



Photo 5.11: Focal Length Scout Shots 1/2

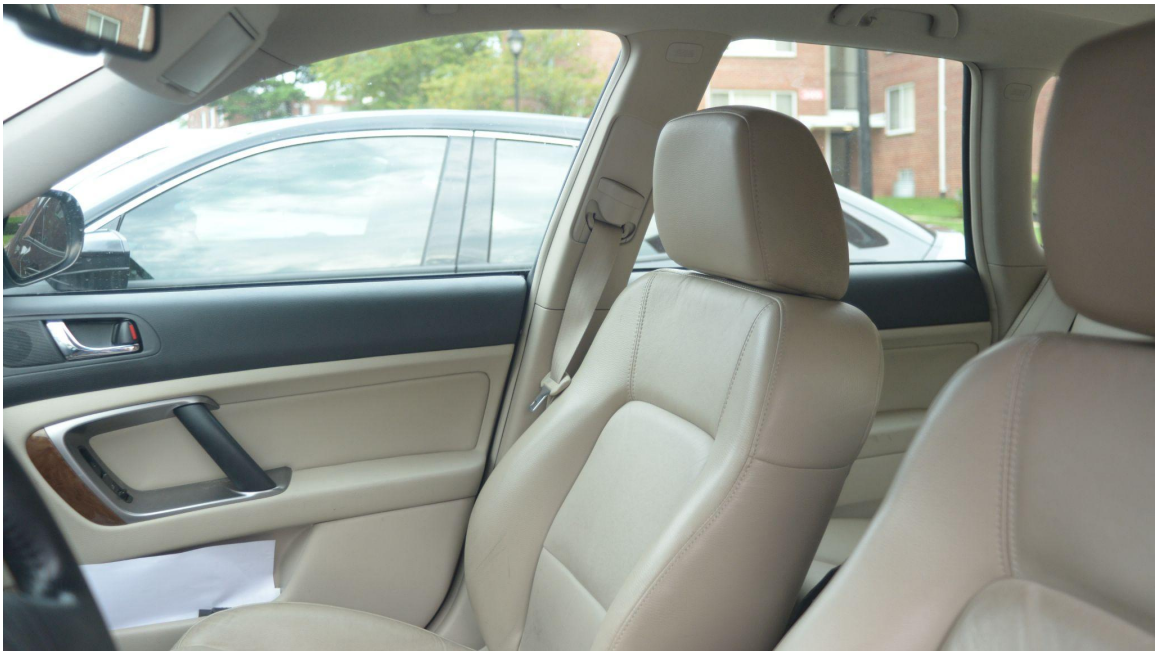


Photo 5.12: Focal Length Scout Shots 2/2

The biggest question was how to film a moving car scene with a stationary vehicle. I came up with two possibilities. The first was to film the car on a green screen background. The pro of this method is that any background can be put behind the car in post. This provides a lot of freedom in the editing. The con is that green screens need to be well lit to work properly, and we were filming a night scene. This is not an impossible hurdle, but it does add a large amount of labor to the editing process. It would also make Heather's job as the lighting designer much harder, as we would not be able to simulate the night time conditions that fell in line with her lighting ideas. The second option was to use a rear projection screen as the background and then project whatever image or video we needed to see in that shot. The pro of this method was that we could film at night in the accurate conditions, and the editing would be far less time consuming. The cons are that we would lose flexibility in editing the background. Additionally, the projector light would have to be carefully balanced so the shot isn't ruined. I talked it over with Heather, and we both agreed that using the rear projection screen would give us the best result.

Next, we had to figure out where we were going to film and with what camera. We needed to procure a camera that had the ability to shoot high quality footage in low light conditions. My personal camera and the ones we had on hand at the Clarice were not good enough to film in low light. After some research, I landed on renting a Sony FX3 and a handful of lenses for the shoot. It was around this time that the Maya Brin Institute for New Performance had been established at the University of Maryland; this is a grant allowing the institution to

build and buy materials for these exact situations. They stepped in and sponsored the purchase of a Sony FX3 camera with a full array of lenses and a camera arm for the film shoot. With the camera handled, I turned my sights towards the location. It was mentioned that we could use the loading docks of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. This seemed like the best option, so I started to look into it. I went to the loading docks with a tape measure. Using the measurements, I created a quick draft of the space to make sure everything would fit (photo 5.13). We had plenty of room. Everything was now in place for the filming.

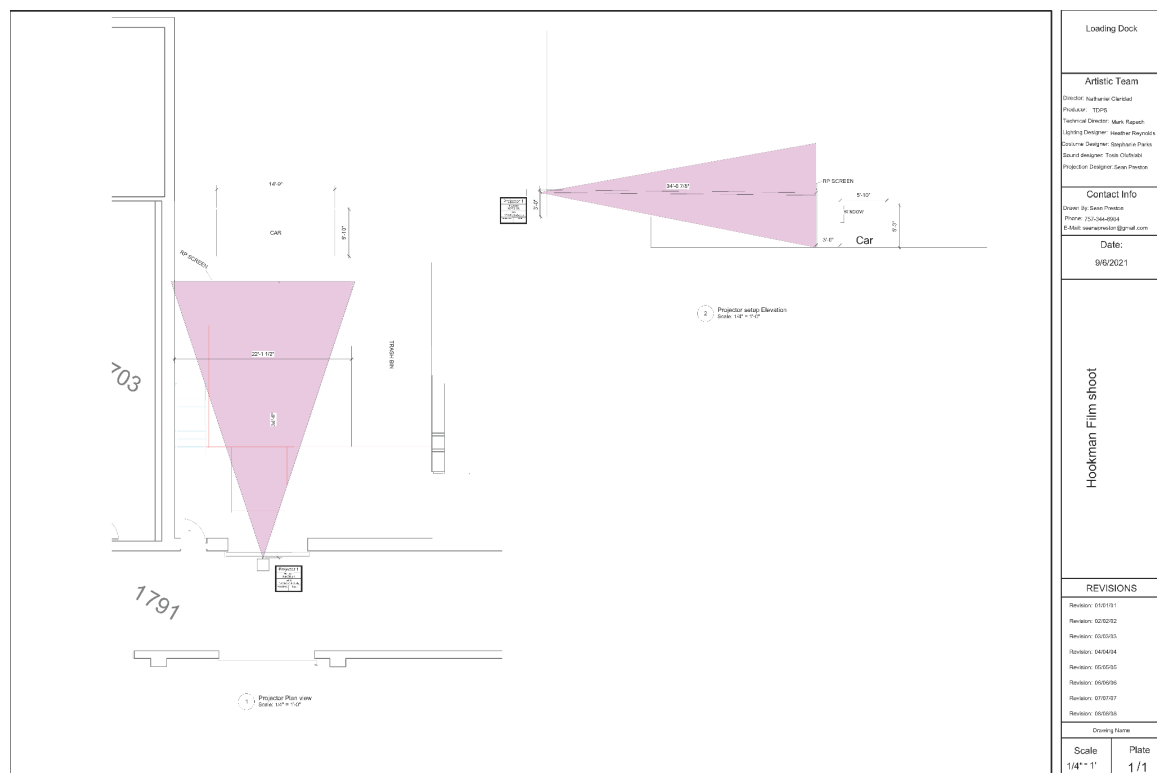
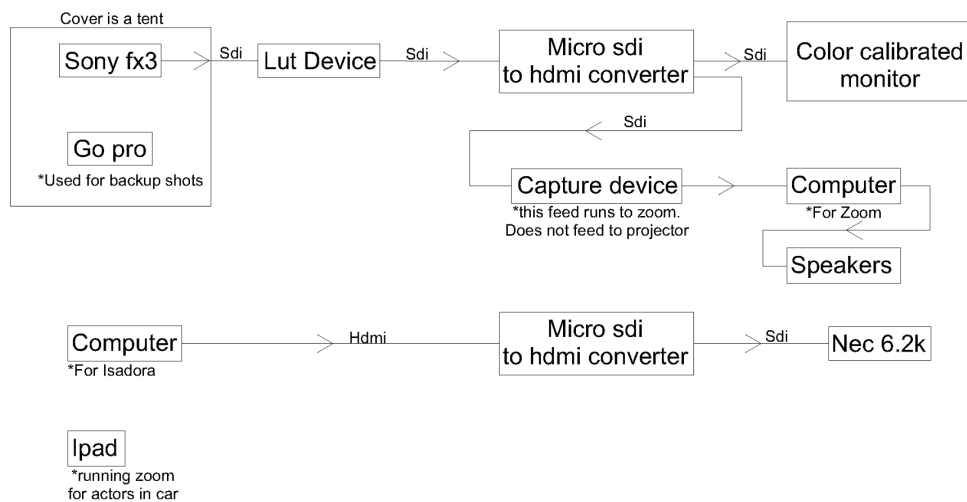


Photo 5.13: Drafting of the Loading Dock With Projector Beams Calculated

A few weeks before the shoot, we learned that Nathaniel was going to be attending remotely. This added a layer of complexity to the shoot, because designers and actors would need direction from Nathaniel. We decided to use a

Zoom call that had the camera footage being live streamed onto it (photo 5.15). This allowed Nathaniel and the other designers to see exactly what was being filmed at all times. We also put Zoom on an iPad so that the actors would not have to leave the car every time Nathaniel needed to give them notes. To make sure we could set up this system, I created a schematic to keep track of all technology being used (photo 5.14). This provided the tech shop with the information to assemble the system and made sure I had all the necessary components accounted for.

Hookman Film Shoot Schematic



Hookman Film Schematic	
Designer: Sean Preston	Date: 9/6/2021
Version: 2	Plate 1/1

Photo 5.14: Schematic of the the Camera System

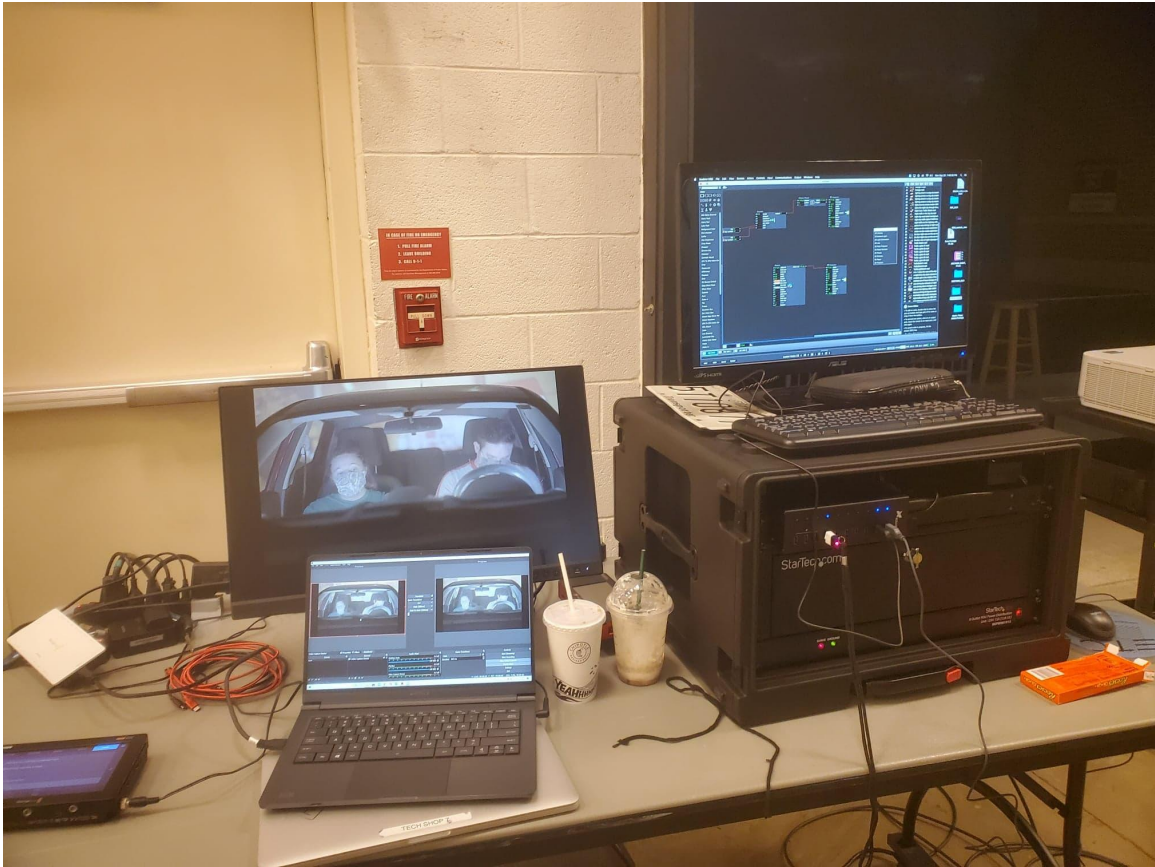


Photo 5.15: Tech Station That Held the Isadora and Zoom Computer

The first day of filming felt frantic. This was my first time leading a film shoot. I had assisted on a few, but never experienced what it felt like to run one. I felt a pressure for the video to look good and for the shoot to run smoothly. Luckily, the filming went, mostly, according to plan. Heather created an amazing system of hidden led lights within the car. They allowed us to create and tailor the lighting in every shot to be what we wanted. We did hit a few minor setbacks, such as the car not starting and a delivery truck beeping in the background, but nothing happened that prevented us from completing our shotlist. A large part of the smooth operation was how much support we had. On the projection side, I

had two assistants: Andrés Poch and Mark Williams. Andrés was responsible for running the Isadora patch as well as taking detailed notes of each film take; these notes would help me sort through the footage later. Mark was responsible for the cinematography. During the shoot, he used his expertise to set up the shots we had planned for and made any necessary adjustments that were needed. We also had several people from the Maya Brin Institute as well as the rest of the design team that made managing the space a simple task.



Photo 5.16: On Set of Filming

There was a drawback from this shoot that I did not notice until I started editing. In the camera, we were recording in a format called log. Footage shot in log tends to have suppressed colors. This is easily fixed in editing as you can,

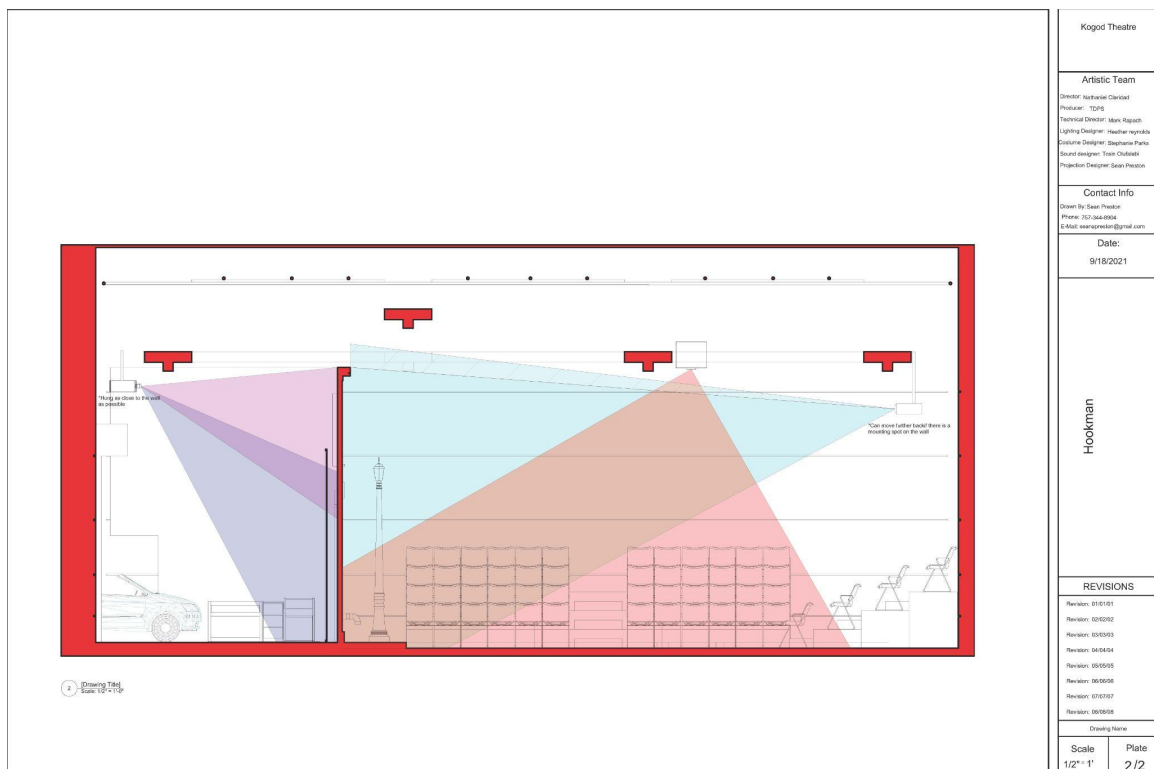
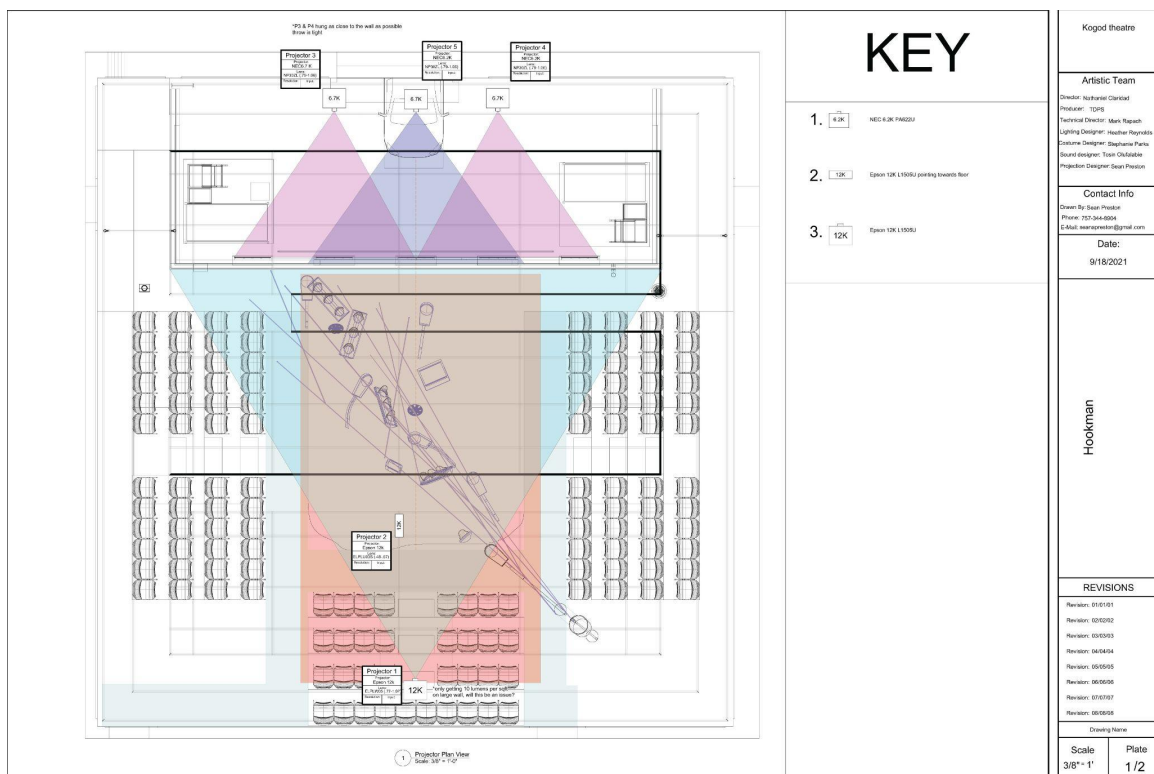
with a single click, convert it to a full rec.709 color space. This is where the problem was hidden. When I went to color correct the footage, the lighting was far too saturated even though it had looked great in the viewport. This made a lot of the footage unusable in that configuration. Though not ideal, the uncorrected footage still looked quite good with a few tweaks to it. Looking back, I realized I was missing a step. The night before the shoot we set everything up and tested the system. As part of this testing, we filmed some short clips with stand-in actors. What I did not do was test the color correction after the shoot. The method I use to color correct starts with placing the footage in the editing software, Adobe Premiere Pro. This software has built-in presets that allow you to convert from one colorspace to another. I had also imported multiple LUTs. LUT stands for look up table and they are pre made color corrections that can easily be applied to footage. By taking the time to test the color correction, I could have avoided the potential setbacks I faced in editing. Luckily, the log colorspace had plenty of flexibility and we didn't have to do any reshoots.

To summarize, this film shoot was difficult, but worth it. In this process I expanded my knowledge on every aspect of film creation. I learned how to plan and organize a shoot. I learned a completely new way to storyboard that felt perfect for how I like to share ideas. I then learned how to film at night and how to fake a car moving on film. It was all done to tell our story as effectively as possible, and to invite the audience into the world of *Hookman*.

Chapter 6- Drafting

The projector draftings are one of the foundational elements of my design process. The reason for this, besides the tech shop needing said drafts, is that in creating the document I am able to answer a lot of questions about the space and spatial relationships that I had not thought of before. Understanding how the space could be used was crucial for being able to tell Lexi's story. In this chapter, I am going to discuss how I drafted the projectors and what updates needed to be made before entering tech.

I started with determining every surface that needed to be hit by the projectors. This came down to four distinct locations: the floor, the back wall, the sliding doors, and the windows. My goal for hitting all of these separate spots was to give myself as many options as possible. I wanted to cover every inch of that set in projections if I needed to. In the drafting, I discovered that the back wall and floor projector overlapped. In part, this overlap gave me the idea for the floor to bleed up into the back wall as one mapped space. While the floor and wall ended up being separately mapped spaces, the idea of the floor leading into the wall stayed. During each car scene, we had a road projected onto the floor that led into a street on the back wall.



Draftings are informational documents, and sometimes require updates as the process progresses. This happened for me as the show was being loaded in. Once I saw scenic sculptures and my projectors in the air together, I realized I had made a miscalculation in my projector placement. The projector that was being used to hit the back wall was being heavily obstructed by the scenic sculpture. In the section view of my plot you will notice that there is no sculpture drawn (photo 6.2). I had forgotten to place it in to check for these obstructions. When we turned the projector on, I saw that nearly half of the back wall was covered in shadow. Mollie Singer, the scenic designer, raised several of the pieces up, but it didn't make a large difference. What I needed to do was move the projector. I found that the space over the stage right seating area was the next best spot (photo 6.3). It minimized the shadows greatly and allowed for me to get the best shot on the back wall as I could. While I did email the lighting and scenic designers of the intended changes, I did not directly meet with them about moving the projectors. The consequence of this was that I was unknowingly adding more work to their plate while trying to rapidly fix my mistake.

My takeaway is that, while changes are inevitable and often necessary, it is critical to consider how my changes will affect others. It is necessary to check in with my collaborators in those stressful moments leading up to tech so that we can enter tech as relaxed and ready as possible. In this stressful period of time my mentor, Jared Mezzocchi, made me aware of the stress I was putting on the lighting designer. I immediately reached out to her to apologize. I'm happy to say

In summation, draftings are a necessary tool for completing a design. They help me to get an understanding of the space and its capabilities long before the set has been constructed. The drafting plates are also crucial in my communication with the rest of the creative team, as any changes that are made can have an effect on their design process as well.



Chapter 7- Organization

Going into this design, I knew that there was going to be a lot to keep track of. This included all the materials for and from the film shoot, cue sheets, and the creation and organization of content. To guarantee that everything went smoothly, I needed to make sure I had documents outlining everything that needed to be done. In this chapter, I will go over the creation of my cue sheet, content creation list, and Isadora file organization bins.

I began by going over the script and annotating where I thought a cue might be, as well as what that cue might entail. I sent this annotated script to my assistant, Andrés Poch, so he could format it into a Google Sheets file (photo 8.1). This file included what the cue number was, what page it is on, what line it is cued on, and whatever content notes I had for it. During tech I could reference this document and make edits to it as changes occurred. I used a color coding system to denote changes during run throughs. If I colored a cell red, it meant that the cue needed to be removed. If the cell was green, then that was a cue I had just added. This allowed me to know what changes needed to be communicated to the stage manager at the top of each day.

CUE #	PG #	Line	NOTES
Cue .1	0		setup cue
Tab .5	0		Blackout
Tab 1	9	top of show	Film Starts
Tab 5	10	End of film	Transition, car enters scene road appears on floor and city moves behind them on the wall
Tab 16	11	Red light	
Tab 17	11	Green light	
Tab 20	12	and someone highbeams you	Highbeams
Tab 21	12	Yeah like that	Car moves
Tab 25	13	Red light	
Tab 30	13	Green light	
Tab 35	15	Red light	
Tab 40	16	Green light	
Tab 41	18	Red Light	
Tab 42	18	Green Light	
Tab 50	19	Lexi watch out!	Shattering glass in slo-mo
Tab 51	19	transition	hookman title card reveal behind the glass
Tab 52	19	transition	Title card shrinks
Tab 55	19	Transition to dorm	have the title card transition to dorm room look
tab 90	27	He said he'll be waiting	hookman fade up
Tab95	27	He said he'll be waiting	hookman fade out

CUE #	PG #	Line	NOTES
Tab 100	28	Lexi falls asleep	door opens
Tab 110	29	door closes	light disappears
Tab 115	32	The truth has a way of making itself known	hookman in door
Tab 116	32	The truth has a way of making itself known	hookman fade out
Tab 125	33	transition to next scene	transition if it is needed, unsure what it would be
Tab 130	34	top of scene	the facetime call fades up
Tab 135	36	Sean types on phone	sean searches for something on his phone age of consent or something
137	google fades out		
Tab 140	38	I dont think I did	Sean is briefly replaced by hookman, like a flash or glitch
Tab 145	39	Stay safe	Another flash of hookman as the call ends
Tab 147		laptop closes	Blackout
Tab 150	40	Transition to next scene	transition, film played in reverse then goes forward maybe we can film a scene in tech and use the longer shot
Tab 152	40	Transition to next scene	add glass
Tab 155	40	Driving loop fades up to finish the transition	red light
Tab 156		Yeahhhhh	green light and car starts to drive
Tab 160	41	I might've been raped	unsure, but important

CUE #	PG #	Line	NOTES
Tab 161		Ohhh I knew this would happen	red light
Tab 165	43	REALLY don't like it when people accuse people of being rapists.	trust broken
Tab 166		I didn't see him at all-rapist	green light and car starts to drive
Tab 170		Lex?	Red light
Tab 171		Hug	green light and car starts to drive
Tab 172		True	Red Light
Tab 175	45	He really did come out of nowhere	shift maybe things slow a little
Tab 177		on your-	green light and car starts to drive
Tab 180	47	They had this white bath mat	drop of blood
Tab 181		Davis?	Red light
Tab 185	50	...I dont remember that	something changes
Tab 190	50	We've done this before	slow mo glass shatter
Tab 195	50	Otters?	otters? maybe backseat shot
Tab 196		Yes jihae	green light and car starts to drive
Tab 200	51	Nobody does	proections intensify
Tab 205	51	We're going too fast	speedometer appears
Tab 210	52	Help me	blood?
Tab 211		sees the wreck	big slowdown
Tab 212			blackout

CUE #	PG #	Line	NOTES
Tab 213	52	Transition	Set bleeds
Tab 215	52	Transition to dorm	blood transition bleeds to become the dorm
Tab 220	58	How you make a mistake and he follows you forever	crack/bend
Tab 222			
Tab 225	59	Yoonji!	lexi yells in window then runs across the windows
Tab 230	59	transition to outdoors	transition to outdoors, its snowing in the windows and on the wallls
Tab 235	61	she'll see the light	car drives by?
Tab 240	62	NO MEANS NO!	something here
Tab 245	63	I just let them in	shift, like the world breaks down
Tab 250	63	Transition to next scene	transition if there is one
Tab 255	65	Murder	snow becomes red
Tab 260	66	Transition to day	snow stops it is day
Tab 270	70	I was supposed to save her	Thing are falling apart
Tab 280	70	Cause it gets better	she feels super alone here
Tab 285	71	Transition to auditorium	transition melts or breaks or something to highschool. there is a banner and maybe some lockers
Tab 287		auditorium transition complete	fade to auditorium

CUE #	PG #	Line	NOTES
Tab 290	75	You can always lose more	Shift
Tab 295	76	I'll be looking at a dog	hookman looms in the window
Tab 300	77	It always comes back around in the end	Something here
Tab 305	78	Transition to car	world becomes the car, but we hit highest level of visual noise and distortion
Tab 310	80	It was me	shatter the world but make it red
Tab 315	81	I'm just trying to help you see	Strobe it
Tab 320	81	You're not Jess	calm, she's finally facing it down
Tab 325	82	final video to credits	
Tab 330	83	blackout	

Photo 8.1: Cue Sheet

The other important document was my content creation list. In this Google Sheet, I listed every piece of content that might need to be made. I organized the content list by scene and cue number. I also tracked what software the content would likely be made in, so that content could be made in batches. This allowed me to quickly track if I had all the necessary elements to build any scene and to track what still needed to be built. Similarly, I color coded the blocks as well. Green was for complete, yellow meant in progress, red for not started, blue for unsure, and purple for being built natively in Isadora (photo 8.2). Since the content list worked as an expanded version of the cue list, the blue blocks represented cues that had no content yet. By including these moments in the list, it allowed me to make sure that I did not forget about these cues. I could then keep coming back to them.

When I shared this list with my assistant, I learned that while it made complete sense for me, it was difficult for him to track what pieces he was

responsible for creating. To resolve this, I created a second sheet that listed only the content needs and its completion status (photo 8.3). This helped him track what was left. I used this document less once I entered tech. Since Andrés was with me the whole time, I was able to have him create and source content during tech. In retrospect, I do wish I had had those content notes documented in this sheet as we went along, but I do not think it hindered the process.

Scene/Cue	Cue	Content	Software	Completion	Links	Questions	
S1	0.5	The film. Edits still need to be made	Premiere				
S1	1	Car driving background loop					Key
		Road loop for the floor - red	Blender				Completed
		Sidewalk BVV -red	Blender				
		Road loop for the back wall - red	Blender				In Progress
		Tree loop for back wall - red	Blender				Not Started
		Building loop for back wall - red	Blender				Unsure
		Streight loop for back wall - red	Blender				To be built in Isadora (natively)
		White stop bar - red	Blender				
		Sidewalk BVV -yellow	Blender				
		Road loop for the floor - yellow	Blender				
		Road loop for the back wall - yellow	Blender				
		Tree loop for back wall - yellow	Blender				
		Building loop for back wall - yellow	Blender				
		Streight loop for back wall - yellow	Blender				
		White stop bar - yellow	Blender				
		Road loop for the floor - green	Blender				
		Road loop for the back wall - green	Blender				
		Tree loop for back wall - green	Blender				
		Building loop for back wall - green	Blender				
		Streight loop for back wall - green	Blender				
		White stop bar - green	Blender				
		Road loop for the floor	Blender				
		Sidewalk BVV-Green	Blender				
		Road loop for the back wall	Blender				
		Tree loop for back wall	Blender				
		Building loop for back wall	Blender				
		Streight loop for back wall	Blender				
		White stop bar	Blender				
		Other (for this cue)					
		Sky loop	Blender				
		Speed limit sign	Blender/Photoshop				
S1	2	Car clock image of 11:59 PM	Photoshop				
S1	2.5	Car clock image of 12:00 AM	Photoshop				
S1	3	World darkens/ adjust for story	Isadora				
S1	4	High Beams animation. Profile view going left to right	After Effects/Photoshop				
	4	High Beam animation. front view getting larger	After Effects/Photoshop		https://www.storyblocks.com/video-stock-image-up-of-headlight-turning-on-switching-to-circles-headlight-to-right-view-modern-car-is-a-lamp-car-front-light-with-a-blurry-background-shiny-yozsujds	something more stylized. more like how bright headlights look when you look at them.	
S1	5	Unsure - highlighting her "punishment" line	?				
S1	5.5	"SOMEONE" - someone is the hookman	?				
S1	6	Tonal shift - not sure if reflected in projections	?				
S1	8	Scrapping noise - not sure if projections does something	?				
S1	9	Pothole	Photoshop/Blender				
S1	10	Broken glass animation that reveals the title card	Blender				
S1 > S2	11	Title card transition to dorm room look	Isadora (for transition)				
		The dorm room look	Mixed				
		Beige plaster walls	Blender/Photoshop				

Photo 8.2: Content List That I Created for Myself

Content still needed as of 10/30/2021			Notes
High Beams animation. Profile view going left to right	After Effects/Photoshop		
High Beam animation. front view getting larger	After Effects/Photoshop		
Broken glass animation that reveals the title card	Blender		
Glass shatter animation	Blender		No logo in this one
Trees/foliage (no leaves, hooklike tree branches)	Blender/Photoshop/after effects		Needs to to gently wave and be able to tap on window
Streetlight, needs modes for being on and off	Blender/Photoshop		
Night sky backgrounds. Bonus if there is a city silhouette	found content		
Small sized City silhouette	Found content		
Big, menacing shadow (hookman-ish)	Photoshop/After Effects		Need picture of hookman
Facetime call elements - computer	Photoshop		pngs
Facetime call elements - cell phone	Photoshop		pngs
Google search bar searching "age of consent"	Photoshop/Screens hot		
Google results page of ^^ search	Photoshop/Screens hot		
2nd/3rd link of said search	Photoshop/Screens hot		
flash of hookman (replaces/overlays sean)	Photoshop		need hookman photo
Drop of blood	After Effects		maybe like an ink in water video color changed to red? like an artistic blood movement
Car elements: Steering wheel	Photoshop		these are the minimum, grab any thing else you may think of
Car elements: Tire	Photoshop		make sure they are png cutouts
Car elements: Blinkers	Found footage		
Car elements: Stoplights	Photoshop		
isolated red yellow and green lights turned off	Photoshop		
isolated red yellow and green lights turned on	Photoshop		

Photo 8.3: Content List That Was Created for My Assistant

Lastly, I organized my Isadora patch to help keep track of all the content in that platform. Within Isadora, I was able to create various folders and name them based on what scene or what type of content would be stored in it. This ensured all road loops were in their own folder, the blood loops were in their own respective folder, and so on. This one small step made programming smoother and made communicating with Andrés a lot easier when I needed him to program.

Having these documents on hand made the tech process run smoothly, since I could easily keep track of the content, cues, and any changes that happened during the process. It was much easier to build and manage the show when I had an organized system to reference. This in turn made it easier to focus on my design concept.

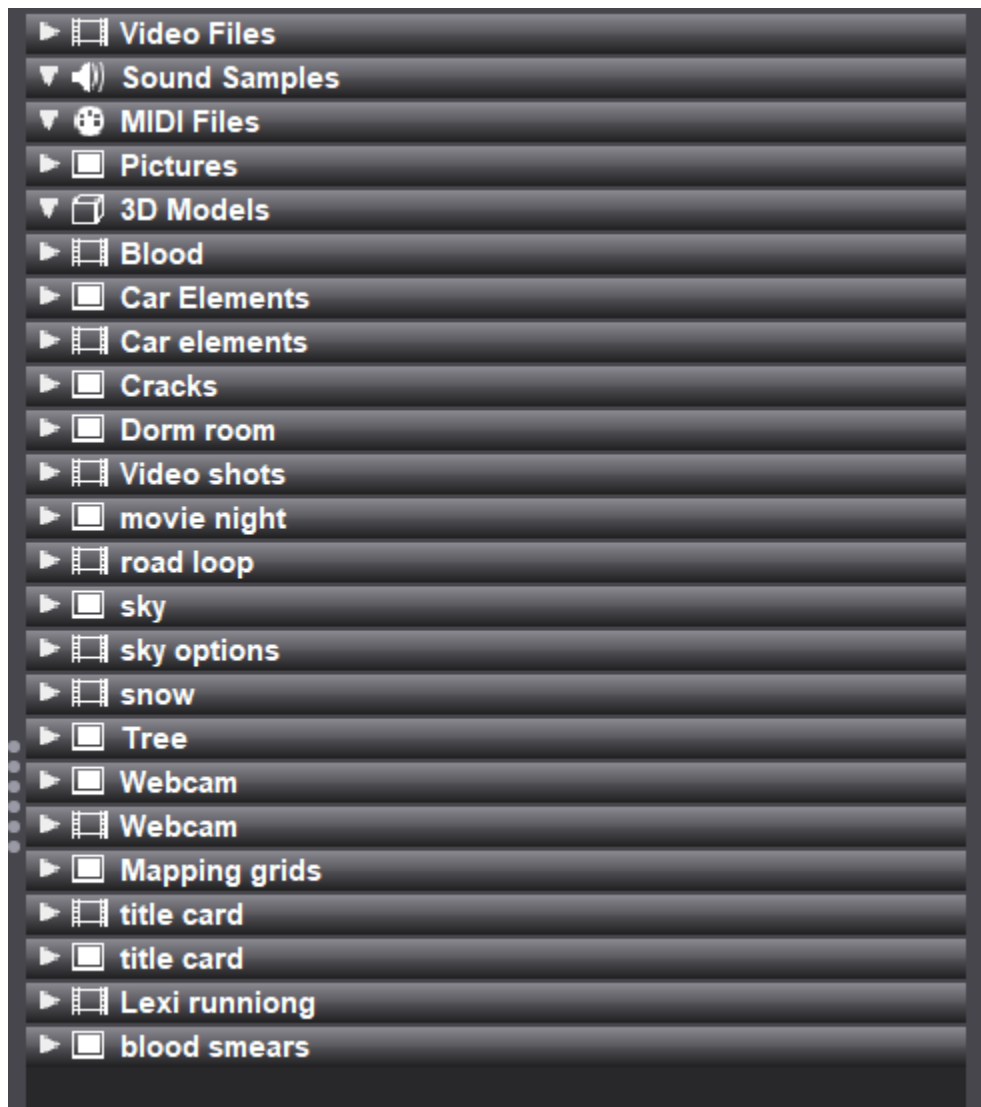


Photo 8.4: Isadora Bin Organization

Chapter 8-Tech Week

After months of preparation and planning, we finally arrived at tech week. This is when all the pieces of the design finally come together with the actors, and the show is made. This is also the time when I got to polish my concept to figure out how to mix it with the rest of the design. I had a clear idea of how to portray Lexi's declining mental health within the car scenes, but I was still searching for the exact language to represent her mental health within the dorm room and outdoor scenes. There is a lot to cover within this chapter. Instead of going through the week sequentially, I am going to break the chapter into four parts. These parts are the car scenes, the dorm room scenes, the outdoor scenes and the transitions. In each section I will walk through the process of creating these scenes.

The car scenes were definitively the backbone of my contribution to the storytelling in this show. Ultimately, the show revolves around Lexi coping with the grief and pain of causing her best friend's death in a car crash. Looking at the car scenes, I wanted to create the story of Lexi's declining mental health. The first scene is used to establish the world. Its goal was to be as realistic as possible; everything looks normal because the accident has not occurred yet. Just like how many people relive their traumatic experiences, Lexi also relives that night every time she returns to the car. We see in each of these scenes her reflection on recent events, her processing it, and trying to heal. In the second car scene, she talks to Jess about her rape. We see her trying to get comfort and support from her late best friend, but finds it is impossible to accomplish. For

projections, the goal was to show how Lexi was failing to cope with these strong emotions. In her day-to-day life she is trying to put on a strong face. These emotions are so difficult for her to deal with that she goes so far as to create a lie that they were hit by a drunk driver and forces herself to forget what actually happened. Her trauma never stops weighing on her, and it eventually overflows. I wanted the audience to see exactly how fractured her mental state becomes through these various points in the show. I did this by introducing distortions to the space and references from the crash that increase in intensity as her mental health declined.

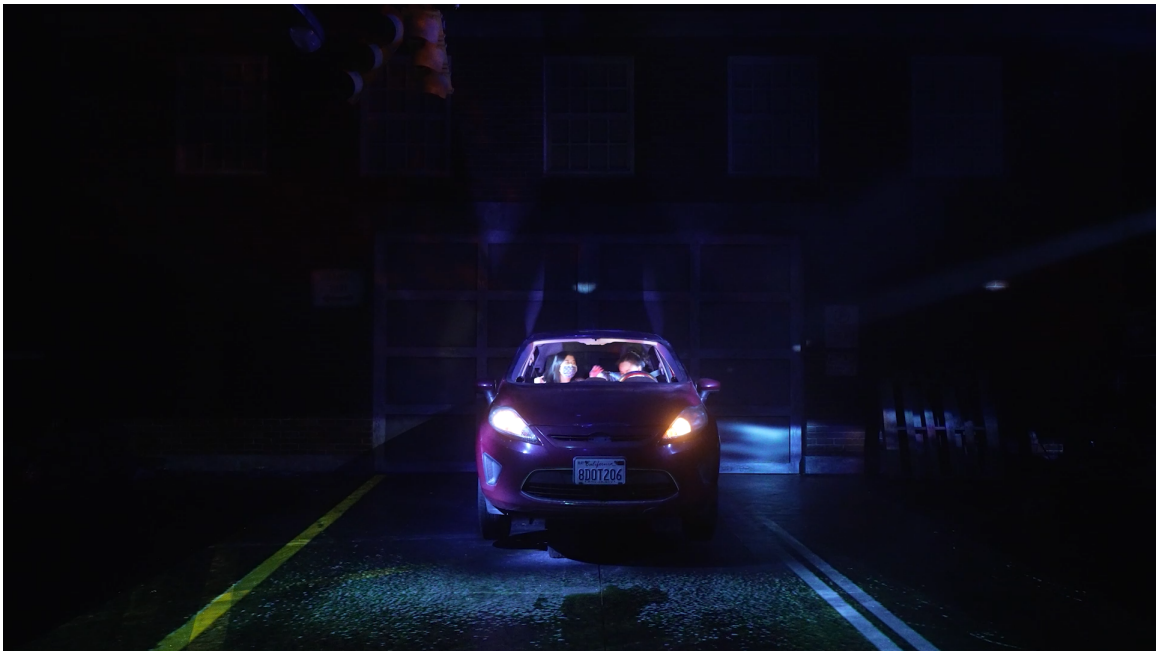


Photo 7.1: First Car Scene

A good example of this is in the second car scene. As Jess and Lexi converse, a speedometer appears on the floor reflecting the speed of the car. As they near the arrival of the crash the speedometer speeds up. We see Lexi try to stop the car. We know she wants nothing more than for the car to stop or turn, but it keeps moving forward until they pass the wreckage and Hookman pops out

from the backseat and kills Jess. It is at this moment that projections go out, and Lexi can only sit there and acknowledge what has happened.

In the third car scene we hit her breaking point. She has experienced all the pain and trauma that she can bear, and she can no longer keep it in. The world that is projected reflects this by being in its most fractured state. There are glass shards floating by, the speedometer is going crazy, we see flashbacks of her conversations with Jess, and a dashboard clock stuck at 11:59pm. It is in this last car scene that Jess holds Lexi's hand and forces her to look at her. Lexi is finally able to take responsibility and realizes that it was not a drunk driver and that she ran the red light. In this moment we see Lexi accept her role in her friend's death. At this moment the world freezes, and Hookman takes Jess' place in the car. Lexi then has to fight with this literal embodiment of her grief and trauma. The fight ends with her sitting in the car with Hookman. She is able to, for the first time, sit with her pain instead of running from it. In these last moments the world starts moving forward again, with no distortions. We see Lexi take the first steps in healing by calling Jess's mom to explain what actually happened.



Photo 7.2: Third Car Scene. The Most Fractured Her Mental Space Gets

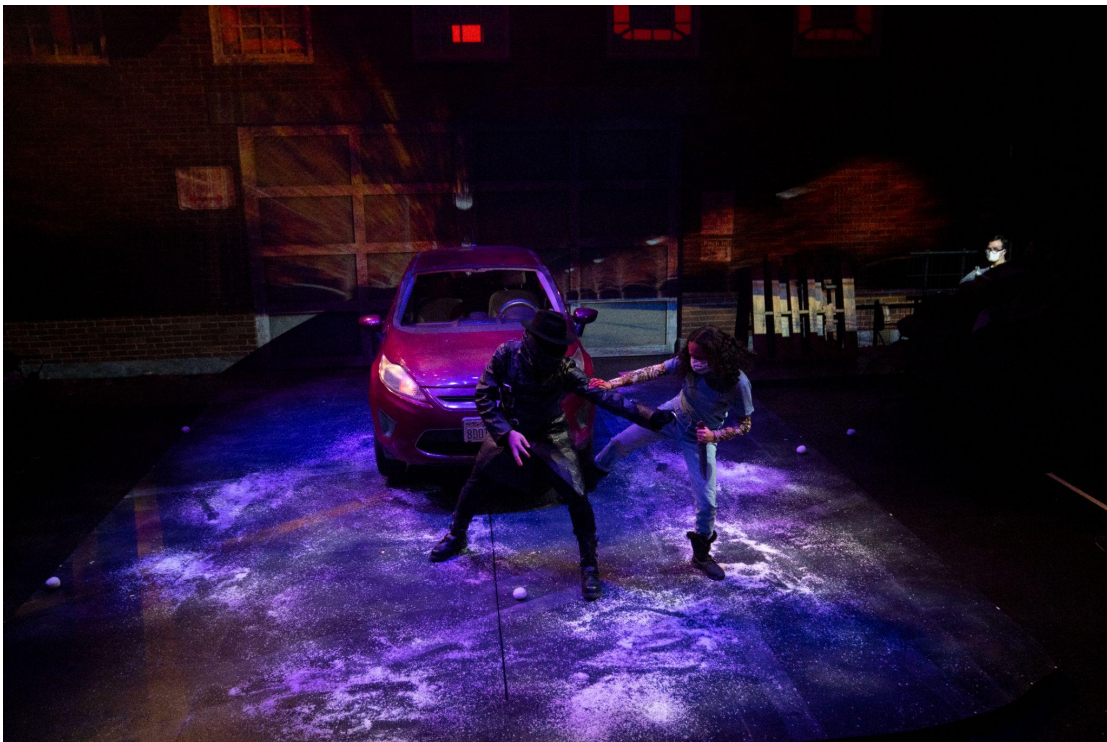


Photo 7.3: Third Car Scene: Lexi Fights Hookman



Photo 7.4: Third Car Scene. The World Turns Red and Everything Freezes.

It is safe to say, that of the design team, I was not the only person focused on these car scenes. It felt like everyone in the room was on the same page about getting these moments right and taking the time to build them as accurately as possible. The structure of these car scenes was successful from an early point in tech. Everyone knew what story these scenes were telling. What took up time was balancing our ideas with each other. An example is when Jess is murdered in the second car scene. Heather and I both had strong ideas, but they didn't mesh. It was several days before we realized that it needed to be a lighting driven moment.

One of the things we accomplished in the first and second car scene was syncing up the lights and projections. As Lexi drives down the street, they stop at a number of red lights along the way. The projected street and background would change to have a red light spilling onto the road. Heather took these moments

and used the street lights hung in the space to reinforce these moments with red light. When the lights turned green, the projections would begin to move again. This blending of scenic, lighting, and media made use of every tool we had to fill the space. One moment that highlights this collaborative effort was at the end of the second car scene. Initially, as Jess is getting murdered by Hookman, I had images of blood and glass covering the whole back wall. I thought that it was the logical conclusion to the scene. I was making some tweaks, so I took the projections out. I noticed that my eyes became laser focused on the murder happening in the car. Immediately, Heather and I loved how that felt. Projections were able to take a step back and lighting was able to have full freedom in the space. Before this moment, I hadn't really thought about the power that removing an image can have on the space and the journey of the eye. It is definitely a tool that I will remember.



Photo:7.5: The Moment the Light Turned Green

I would work on these car scenes a bit each day. What made it difficult was getting the actions of sound, lights, and projections to happen simultaneously. The main reason this process took so long was that the projection programming for these scenes was complicated, and it took me a while to develop a system in Isadora that would transition between the cues seamlessly. There were many moments where a red light cue was green, or the video was frozen when it should have been moving. It was a painstaking process to comb through all the disconnected cues, but once that was ironed out, the scenes flowed beautifully. These are the three scenes that I am the proudest about. The collaboration between the different design fields enhanced the storytelling and made our journey through Lexi's fragile mind clear and trackable.

The next segment of this chapter is going to focus on the dorm room scenes. As I went into tech, these were the scenes that I had the least clear vision of. The dorm room scenes represented the real world within the play. It is in these scenes that Lexi is actively trying to hide her mental distress. This gave the media a challenge as it was far harder to track how her mental state was changing in the dorm room scenes. Alongside that, I had to figure out a way for the media to subtly exist in the scene, without breaking the reality the script was presenting. I projected various posters and tapestries to indicate the two girls' respective spaces in the room. Each day I would add more to the wall. My goal was to create each of their spaces, then make the projected room respond to Lexi's mental state. Some of my initial ideas included making posters fall off the wall, or having headlights shine through a projected window. It never felt correct

or convincing. After a meeting with my mentor, Jared Mezzocchi, I realized that it didn't feel convincing because it was not connected to the story the media was trying to tell. In the car scenes I had established that projections were inherently connected to Lexi's mental state. In the dorm room scenes they felt like scenic reinforcement. With three days of dress rehearsals left, I cut all the content out of the dorm room scenes and watched the show with a fresh eye. With no projections, I could see that Heather was dimming the lights to highlight Lexi's psychological shifts. The show suddenly felt like it was breathing. The projections were suffocating those scenes by adding a lot of visual weight without deepening the story.

Seeing the lighting shift in the dorm scenes sparked a new idea. I knew that the media's goal was to reflect Lexi's mental health. I also remembered Nathaniel saying that he wanted there to be subtle moments in the show that only some audience members would be able to catch. It suddenly clicked. The only thing Lexi seemed concerned or scared about in the dorm room scenes was the appearance of Hookman. Taking the cues from lighting, I built in silhouettes of Hookman whenever the lights would dim. They were subtle, only lasting a few seconds, but it felt like they added a force in the space, a force that was watching Lexi and following her. Unfortunately, I don't know if anyone actually saw it. When I asked a few of my friends and mentor about these moments, not one of them had noticed Hookman looming in the background. This doesn't mean it wasn't felt, but it does make me want to go back and push those moments just a bit

further to explore how his presence in the space affected the perception of the scene.

Next, I am going to address the outdoor scenes. These scenes were interesting because they are when the real world and Lexi's mental fragility collide. In the first outdoor scene, we see Lexi attempt to stop Hookman from killing her roommate by trying to recruit the help of an RA. Instead of helping, he tries to sell her weed and get her to come back to his room to take her top off (photo 7.7). In the next scene, we hit the climax as Hookman succeeds at ripping the face off of Lexi's roommate, Yoonji. These several scenes are a direct commentary on how little help students receive on college campuses from those they should be able to get help from.

In the same vein as the other scenes, the media's goal was to show Lexi's mental state. In these scenes, it took the form of snow. As Lexi became angrier and more desperate the snow would pick up in intensity, almost whiting out the back wall at times (photo 7.8). As we hit the climactic moment of Hookman murdering Yoonji, the snow becomes blood (photo 7.6). A cut appears across the back wall referencing Jess's murder in the previous car scenes. As we enter the next morning, projections leave the space. We are left with Lexi seeing the outcome of her inability to help, and the active negligence of those around her who refused to lift a hand to stop the violence from occurring, because it was "just a drunk girl who had it coming."



Photo 7.6: Yoonji Being Murdered



Photo 7.7: Lexi Talking to Her RA

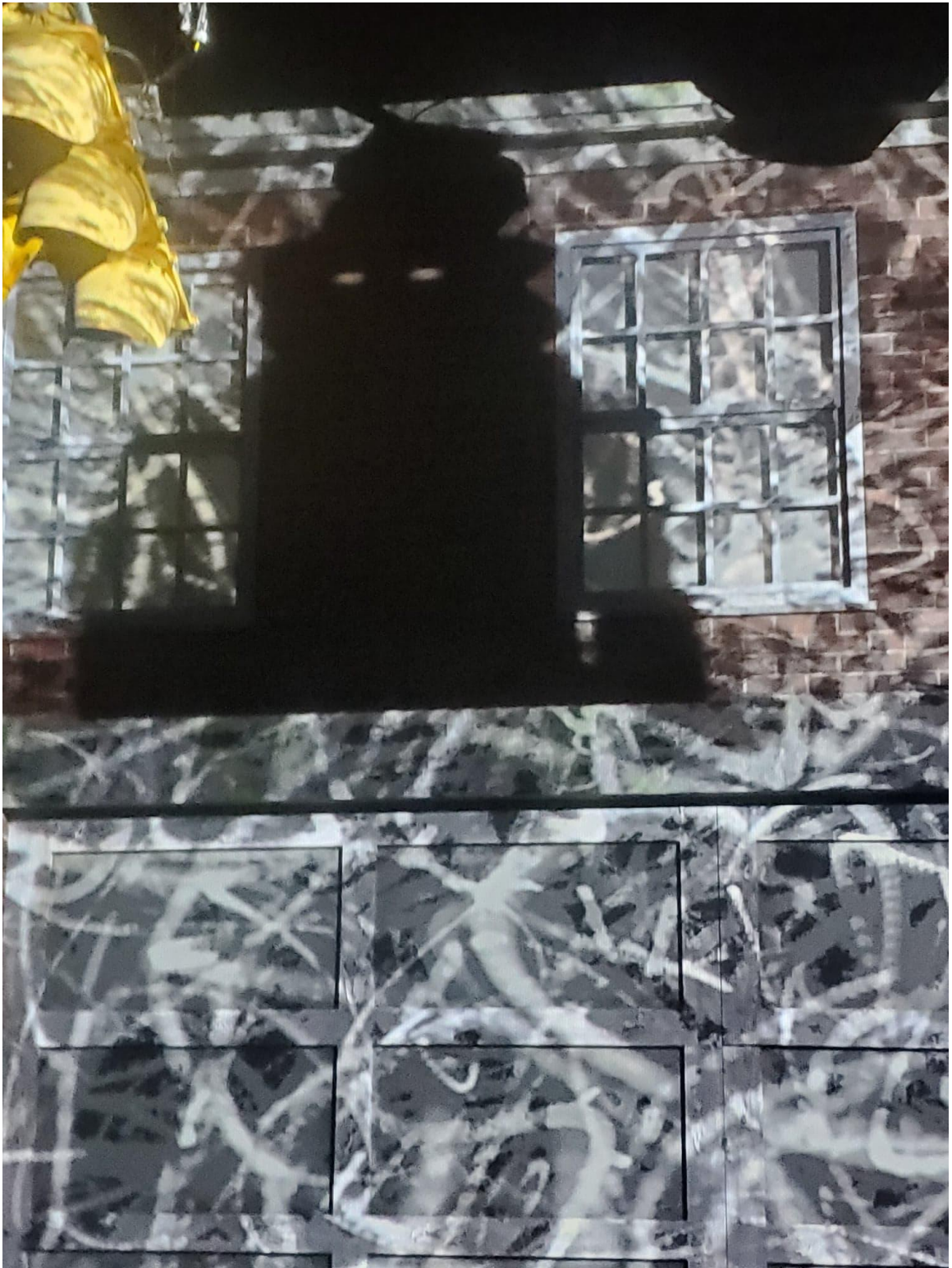


Photo 7.8: Snow Reacting to Lexi's Emotions

These outdoor scenes were a challenge I had to overcome. Originally, we had planned these scenes to be similar to the car scenes in style. The whole back wall and floor was intended to create a snowy outdoor world, which violence

would alter. Upon testing this idea in space, I learned the red brick wall of the set made any snow appear as white light. To overcome this hurdle, I projected falling snow instead. The movement of the individual snowflakes read clearly on the brick wall. This shift also let me retain my idea of having the snowy world respond to the violence.

Lastly, I am going to expand on the transitional moments in the show. For many shows, projections exist heavily within transitions due to the low light and need to fill the space with action. *Hookman* was no exception to this. For example, every time the car needed to enter or leave, the space required a large transition. While in the tech process, we discovered the transitions were going to take an exceptionally long time. It is normal during the tech process for the transitions to take longer at the start and become faster as the run crew becomes more familiar with what they need to do, but it was obvious these transitions would take a minute or two each, instead of the twenty or thirty seconds we had originally anticipated.



Photo 7.9: Car Transition

As the story transitioned from one scene to another, it was important to capture elements of both scenes within these transitional moments. As I started building these moments, I struggled to find a good flow. Hearing the songs that the sound designer, Tosin Olufalabi, picked for the transitional moments was helpful in locking down the feeling of each transition. The rhythm and feeling of the music informed my own explorations and made it easier to create something that thematically blended the two scenes. The transition into the second car scene was an excellent example of this collaboration between sound and projections. Originally, what I had built for that moment was a transition focusing on the reversal of time, until I heard the song *Stupid* by Ash Niko play. The intensity of the vocals as well as the repetition of the phrase “stupid boy think that I need him” sparked an idea within me. The previous scene addressed her being raped by her ex-boyfriend and the next scene began with her opening up to Jess

about that incident. My idea was to visualize Lexi's desire to talk to her best friend by layering multiple clips of Jess and Lexi onto the back wall (photo 7.10). This collage of imagery, alongside Ash Niko's aggressive vocals, addressed the themes of both scenes and allowed for a fluid transition.



Photo 7.10: Transition Idea

As we ended the first week, I saw how these transitions worked in a full run of the show. They were not particularly successful. They passed the time, but they were lacking in storytelling and needed additional development. We also learned we needed more than the projections and sound to carry these moments. As a team, we searched for places where we could add action into the transitions. Examples of adding this action included: an actor searching for someone or Hookman stalking his next victim. I also rethought and rebuilt several of the transitions to better tell the story. Originally, the transition would fade up as

one composition. I changed this to having different elements appear over the course of the transition to create more of a visual story with these moments, instead of creating more of a visual statement.

By the time the show opened, we had reworked most of the transitions to tell a better story, but I don't feel we overcame the barrier of how long the transitions were. The transitions weren't able to keep the tension that existed in the scenes. It felt like we would hit the height of a scene and by the time the next scene started, that energy dissipated. Without a longer tech, I do not think we could have fully resolved this issue. The solution was in the planning of the show. If we had accurately flagged the time frame of these transitions early on, we could have devised a plan for what would happen in these moments. With more time, I could have looked deeper into the storytelling of these moments. Nathaniel would have brainstormed ideas in rehearsal. At the end of the day, we solved the transitional issues as we noticed them. It is a defining feature of theater to solve unexpected problems like this as a team.

All in all, I was very pleased with how tech went for this show. While there were definitive hurdles expanding my concept into the rest of the scenes and refining the transitions, I felt that the design was refined throughout tech and my concept sharpened over that week and a half. I also want to say that the energy in the room while we were working was friendly and generous. The ease and friendliness Nathaniel brought to the first concept meeting spread to the rest of the process. All of my collaborators were actively taking notes on the entirety of the show. It felt like we were moving forward together. The sense of

lightheartedness and willingness to adapt is something I have come to really enjoy and will try to bring to any tech room I work in.

Chapter 9- Programming

In *Hookman*, I used the media server, Isadora, to build the cues for the show. The reason I picked this software is that it allows the designer to make rapid changes to their content in tech. Isadora is also optimized for creating interactive systems. This feature was important to the storytelling in *Hookman*. I needed to have the media be able to respond and change fluidly to the changes in Lexi's mental state. In this brief chapter, I am going to walk you through how I programmed the first car scene and what challenges had to be overcome to make it function.

As I was planning the show, I was faced with a unique programming and content generation problem. In the first scene we see Lexi and Jess driving down the road, stopping at the occasional red light. I created a looping video of a road on the floor and lined it up with a looping city street video on the back wall. I made them all in a digital animation software called Blender, so it was quite straightforward to make it a seamless loop. What proved difficult was slowing the looping video down to a stop, and starting it back up in a live setting. The first thought I had was to try slowing it down in Isadora. After about a 50% reduction in speed, it would start skipping. Videos and animation create movement by having a number of frames per second, typically 24 or 30. When you slow the video down in a software like Isadora, you are lowering the frame rate that it plays back in. The human eye starts to see the individual frames of a video at around 12 frames per second. Anything lower than this starts to look stuttered and is not useful when trying to slow something down smoothly. The solution was

to render out the animation at a whopping 60 frames per second. By rendering out at a higher frame rate, I was able to get the animation to slow down while still looking smooth. I then programmed the video to freeze once it hit a framerate that would cause it to stutter. This took me several days of work to figure out, but allowed us to keep that environment as a live piece of the show. Traditionally, something like this would be time coded. For example, the start up of the car to the first red light would always be three minutes long. I stepped away from that methodology for this show, as it felt too rigid. I wanted the content to remain flexible so if the actors said their lines faster or slower on any given night the design could respond to that.

The other difficult part of this programming sequence was changing the color of the lights. I wanted to be able to work with lighting so that when the car stopped at a red light, the red light would be seen on the road and trees in the background. To do this, I had to render out the road animation a total of eight times. Both the back wall and floor were rendered with a base, red, yellow, and green light look. Originally, this number was closer to sixteen so that I could have each individual element of the back wall, like the trees, buildings, road, and streetlights be their own video. This was too much for the computer to process at the same time, so I scaled it back to eight. In Isadora, I had all eight of these videos run simultaneously, but with just the base look visible. When we hit a red light, all the videos would slow down and stop while having the base look fade down and the red light look would fade up. Since the only difference in these videos was the lighting, it made for a seamless transition. This was something I

had never seen done before and after building it, I can see why. While the payoffs, for me, were well worth it, programming this way is a time consuming process that takes substantial planning to execute correctly. Now that I know this process, I look forward to seeing how else it can be implemented within live performance.



Photo 9.1: First Car Scene Programming, Full System

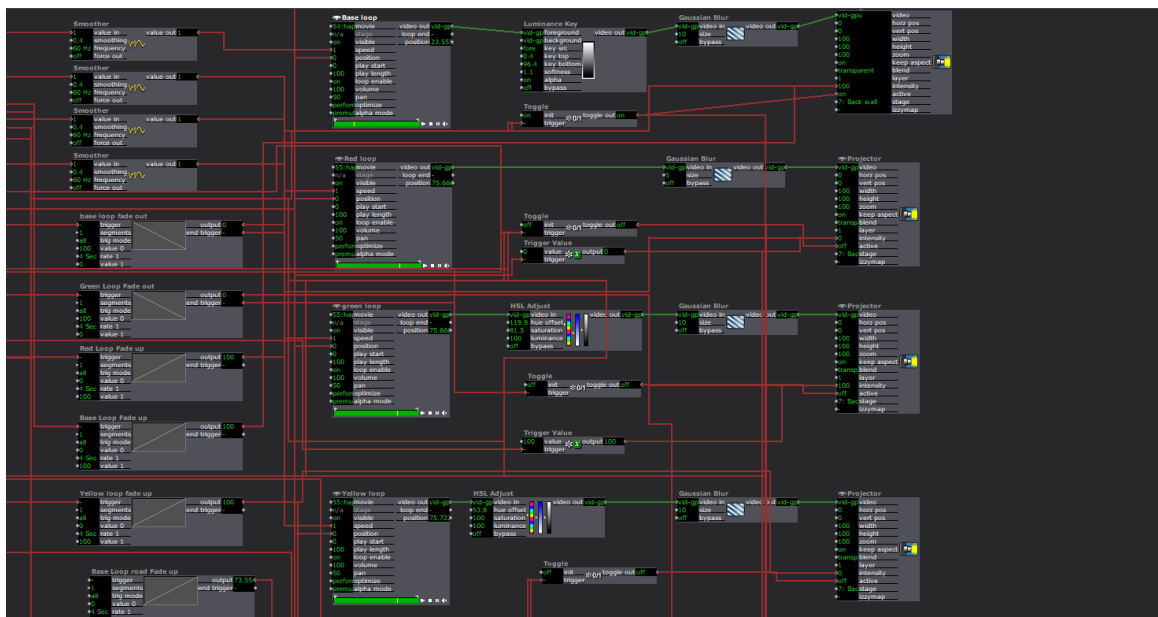


Photo 9.2: First Car Scene Programming. A Look at How the Loops Crossfade

Chapter 10- Communication

Communication is a skill that can make or break a design. How well a design team communicates with each other, as well as communicating with the director, can directly influence the quality of a show. During the *Hookman* process, I felt strange about the communication with the director and design team. I am hesitant to say that the communication was poor, because there were parts of it that I really appreciated, but I felt like more communication needed to happen in the later stages of the process. In this chapter, I am going to go over the communication between designers, personal communication with the director, and group communication.

Starting off the process, I really enjoyed the level of communication that the whole team shared. At every meeting it felt like we had specific goals we were trying to achieve as a group. Nathaniel not only cared about design updates, but we also took the time to discuss specific moments or themes that were guiding the show. It was this specificity that I believe led to our success in these early stages. As a design team we were working well together. Mollie, Heather, and I were able to play off each other's ideas. From an early stage, it felt like we were able to successfully adapt and adjust our designs to each other's needs. Nathaniel was also extremely clear about the type of show that we were trying to create and was phenomenal at guiding the team towards that vision. He did this while keeping everyone smiling. Something I loved about this process was our ability to laugh and smile while working together.

Once we hit load-in, I felt communication become more difficult. In an earlier chapter, I mentioned how I could have used better communication to include Heather into the changes that I rushed to make with the projectors. While I kept her up to date on the changes, I never sat down with her to see how those changes would affect her design, and to see if there was a solution that could have given her a minimal change in workload. I did apologize to her for the added stress before we hit tech week. I feel that the apology did a lot to relieve stress going into tech week.

I felt a rift in communication during tech week that is hard to pinpoint. On one hand, Heather and I were actively and fluidly responding to each other's designs as we went. I would do something with the media and she would respond to it. When she would make changes to her lights, I could respond to it with very few words needing to be exchanged. At that moment, I really liked this exchange. We had small chats about specific moments as they came up, which felt smooth and effortless. What I wonder now, looking back at the process, is if we needed to thoroughly discuss each scene. I wonder if there were opportunities that we didn't recognize at the time, because we didn't talk about our specific goals. I want to keep this in mind for future collaborations, to make sure I am on the same page as my lighting designer about how to best tell the story.

This leads me into an analysis of my own communication skills. During this process I had very little issue receiving notes or adjustments from the rest of the design team, but I did find myself hesitating or feeling unable to give notes

during tech. I can think of one specific exchange I had with Stephanie, the costume designer. She gave me a great note about removing the speedometer during the big fight scene, because the greens from it were hitting the actor's costumes in a distracting way. On my end, there was one character's shoes that just felt totally wrong. For some reason, I just never thought it was my place to bring that up. The shoes did end up getting switched out for a much better looking pair, but maybe it could have been done sooner if I had spoken up when I had noticed it. This showed me that I have work to do in pushing back against my conceptions of hierarchies in theatre. I believe that the best shows are ones where everyone can have a voice to make the show the best it can be. If that is the type of environment I want to work in, I also have to be able to give useful notes to my collaborators as well as receive them.

Strengthening that ability will also help in my communication with directors. For *Hookman*, there needed to be more communication from the director during tech. During the tech process, he was very hands off and only gave sparse notes. I believe it was because he trusted us. We entered tech prepared to tell the same story, so I think he felt he could sit back and watch it come together. The downside is that I, and most of the design team, did not feel like he was providing helpful feedback. This loops back to the specificity that made earlier parts of the design so successful. In the tech process, his notes and responses became more general and that lack of specificity made it harder to hone in on that final image we all shared. I would ask him about certain ideas or cues I was building and would never receive pushback or conversation about the

idea. My questions like “What do you think about this cue?” would be met with something along the lines of “I like it” or “that looks great”. On the surface that seemed fine, but I realized that I didn’t feel like he was guiding the vision. Though I realize his lack of notes came from a place of trust in us, I did feel like specific communication would have helped. On my side of that relationship, I realize I could have pushed harder for him to give me more in depth answers of what he wanted from the scene. I could have asked better, more specific, questions. As soon as I realized I felt a lack of guidance, I should have brought that up to him. I’m sure he would have pursued a more communicative approach.

I noticed a similar lack of action between the other designers and the director. As we talked throughout tech week, we were all feeling there weren't enough directional decisions being made. We should have brought this up to Nathaniel as a group. We also experienced a disconnect between what Nathaniel communicated with us as we entered tech week. During our design meetings we had heavily focused on the grief and trauma of the car crash, and had not gone super deep into the sexual assault narrative. We were aware it existed and accounted for it, but it was not the driving force for the design. At some point during the rehearsal process, this part of the show became a primary driving force. This change was not communicated to us until halfway through the tech process. I was told by Nathaniel that I needed to project a message about sexual assault on college campuses at the end of the show. That final message completely changed the tone of the show and distorted what we, as a design team, were trying to say. I want to make it clear that we were not against making

a statement on sexual assault, it was that this change in focus was never communicated and affected everyone's designs. With earlier notice we could have made that narrative more clear and integrated into the design. We never had that chance, so this message ended up feeling like an afterthought. As a team, I don't know what we could have done to effectively push back on it. This message was something directly requested by the actors, and Nathaniel was firm on keeping it in. A group conversation needed to happen with Nathaniel to point out how this addition affected the show and to see if there were things we could do to adjust the performance towards this narrative; making this focus more prominent. Communication sooner about the change in this underlying narrative would have eliminated the superficial fix at the end.

While there were some definite communication snags during tech, I am overall very happy with how the communication went. Every member of the design team was able to communicate their ideas clearly, show generosity in their approach, and were extremely flexible to adjusting their designs to create a stronger show. I stated earlier that this was the happiest design team I have been on. I will continue to look for and foster environments where work can be made while smiling and laughing.

Chapter 11- Final Thoughts

With opening night, the process came to an end. No more changes could be made, and the show was locked. I remember getting dressed up in a nice outfit, and I was excited because my parents had come to see a show I had worked on for the first time in eight years. What I had overlooked was that opening night was completely sold out. In the rush of the last two weeks, I had completely forgotten to order my ticket. For me, this was actually a godsend. While my parents were watching the show, I was able to step away and take a breath, knowing that my work was done. I knew I would be focused on mistakes in the show that no one else would notice. There were so many aspects of the show I still wanted to change and polish. The road loop needed to be longer, the transitions needed to tell better stories, Hookman's silhouette needed to be pushed further, the snow scenes were too scenic. At that moment I was required to step back, let go of the show, and let it exist without me nitpicking every moment. I truly think that is what I needed. At the end of the show, I walked out and talked with people who saw it. Hearing how much the audience liked it made the process worth it. Fun fact, my parents were not a big fan, but I chalk that up to it being a show about undergraduate students for undergraduate students. Across the board, the undergrads it was written for seemed to resonate with it, and I am happy about that.

As an artist, this whole process was eye opening. I have always had a hard time pinning down exactly what it is that drives me as an artist. What questions am I trying to answer, and how do I bring that question with me to a

new show? Before and during this show, not having the answer to these questions made it difficult to conceive a clear idea. The ideas felt fuzzy and ungrounded. As I finished up *Hookman*, the answer started to reveal itself. I am someone who is deeply interested in my and others' relationship to the space around them. I am specifically interested in the relationship of how each person can affect space and how a created space can affect those that join it. Looking at my work lined up over the three years I spent at the University of Maryland, it seems clear that those were the concepts I have been grappling with. In *Subject to Change*, I took my first steps in having the media respond to the dancer. In *Hookman*, I was learning to create an environment for a fragile mind to exist in. With *Is Edward Snowden Single?*, a show that I designed shortly after *Hookman*, I explored how digital characters can exist in and interact with the real world. Another way I am exploring the investigation into space is through my Arduino experiments. I have been looking for ways to give control of the space to the individual. This led to the creation of *Starlight Symphony*, an installation where the participant plays a silent piano that creates a myriad of stars on the walls in response to their playing.

I came to this University knowing I wanted to make art, but I didn't know why I needed to make it, or what it was that I was trying to say. While I feel closer to those answers than I ever have, I realize that these three years were not about someone answering those questions for me. It was about me learning how to build myself a path that I am confident will lead me to those answers, as well as the answers to any new questions that come up along the way.