

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**THTR 132a**  
**Fall 2017**

**The Art of Theatrical Design**  
**Monday 10-11:50am**



Achim Freyer  
Installation Ace Gallery

**Location:** KAP 164

**Instructor:** Sibyl Wickersheimer

**Office:** JEF 200

**Office Hours:** Mon 12-1/Th 11-12, only by appt

**Contact Info:** <mailto:sawicker@usc.edu>

## **Course Description and Overview**

A guided student exploration of the fundamentals of applied design elements and their use as creative tools in the design process.

## **Learning Objectives**

To promote the development of the artistic process and theatrical design vocabulary of the individual within the environment of collaborative storytelling. Group discussions, collaborations, and hands-on projects will be important elements of the class while simultaneously creating a foundation for long term development of the students' own artistic process. Emphasis will also be placed on interdisciplinary and multimedia approaches to design, storytelling, interactive installation and performance.

## **Class Meeting information**

Assignments and Sketchbook assignments are to be completed prior to your arrival in class.

Turn off cell phones during all class sessions and put them away.

If your phone rings or is used during class, you may be excused for the remainder of the class period.

## **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

Students may want to set up a Design lab account. To be discussed.

### **Texts:**

#### **Purchase:**

*The Creative Habit*, Twyla Tharp

*A Director Prepares*, Anne Bogart

Theatrical Design & Production, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. by J. Michael Gillette (PURCHASED FOR 130 & 131)

#### **View selections from the following texts on Blackboard:**

*The Dramatic Imagination*, Robert Edmond Jones

*Unbalancing Acts*, Richard Foreman

*Bee Season*, Myla Goldberg

*Breath*, Samuel Beckett

*The Collaborative Habit*, Twyla Tharp

**Additional Texts For Reference (both will be required in 132b and other BFA classes):**

Model Making: Materials & Methods by David Neat

Designer Drafting and Visualization, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Patricia Woodbridge

**Film References:**

Robert Irwin, *The Beauty of Questions*

*From Start to Finish: De Wain Valentine's Gray Column*

Gary Hustwit, *Objectified & Helvetica*

Terry Gilliam, *Brazil*

Ridley Scott, *Bladerunner*

Wim Wender, *Pina*

Julie Taymor, *Titus*

Susan Froemke, *Wagner's Dream*

PBS's series: *Art 21*

TateShots: Olafur Eliasson

**Supplies**

Digital camera

sketchbook - white paper – **no lines** – at least 8"x10" but can be larger

*Architectural* scale rule

25' or longer tape measure

metal, straight-edge ruler

Exacto knife and blades to fit size#11

Cutting matt – 18"x24" is best but 12"x18" is easier to transport

Glue stick, white glue & hot glue

Tape(various)

**Grading breakdown**

Work in class will be mostly 'hands on', project based work. All projects and assignments will be graded using a point system. Reading assignments will be expected to be completed before the following class session after they are assigned; there will be quizzes on the readings. Written assignments and visual presentations are to be turned in via uploading files to specific Google Drive folders as specified by instructor. Please use the following naming format: NAME\_DATE\_CLASS PROJECT for example WICKERSHEIMER\_8\_29\_2017\_132aMETRO.pdf

No late work (assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises) shall be accepted without penalty unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur. Assignment grades will be lowered automatically by at least one letter grade if they are not turned in by the assigned deadline. Attendance will effect the student's final participation grade. If the student has more than 2 unexcused absences, overall grade may also be lowered by 10%.

If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned when midterm grades are due. I am available to discuss your progress in class. **I encourage you to make an appointment to meet with me at least once during the semester.**

**ASSIGNMENTS: TOTAL 220 pts**

Metro Assignment (20pts)

Creative Autobiography (10pts)

Sketchbook & Image Library: (45pts) You will be given weekly guidelines and graded on the completeness and organization of the final collection.

Quizzes on assigned reading material and performance. (4@10pts=40pts)

*Breath* Narrative Storyboards (20pts)

Bee Season Artist Presentation (10pts) and Model Project (20pts) Collaborative presentation of model, plan view, and foley artifacts for a given text excerpt.

Final Project: Attend Thornton Opera's presentation of *Alcina*. Create a visual and written paper project, critiquing the opera performance *Alcina* and its impact on you through sharing your experience attending the performance and your understanding of the story & the production. Use Bibliography and/or citations where necessary. (40pts)

Participation in class (15pts) Engaging in class discussions and willingness to respond to questions and ideas posed to the class.

### Grading Criteria

Point values are assigned to individual projects & assignments listed above. The final course grade is based on the following percentages of your accumulated points divided by the total points possible for all assignments (220):

The final course grade is based on the following scale of percentages:

A=100-94, A-=93-90, B+=89-87, B=86-84, B-=83-80, C+=79-77, C=76-74, C-=73-70, D=69-60, F= below 59

**A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

### Statements on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

#### Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

#### Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs [http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Course Calendar & Assignments (always subject to change)

READING/MEDIA/EXERCISE

WEEK 1 Aug. 21	<b>SEEING:</b> Active and passive discovery. Inspiration. Promoting discovery and invention. What is 'the artistic process'? What is in your tool kit?	In class: excerpts from Robert Irwin, <i>The Beauty of Questions</i> , and <i>TateShots:OlafurEliaon</i> Assignment: sketchbook #1 Read: Tharp, <i>The Creative Habit</i> p.1-45
WEEK 2 Aug. 28	<b>WORK &amp; PROCESS</b> Organizing thoughts and ideas into concepts, themes, and relevant communication. Decision, selection, and the rigor of creative design. Exposing the artistic process. What's in your box and how is it organized?	In class exercise translating text into image. Watch excerpts from Helvetica & Objectified. Due: Sketchbook Assignment #1 (due every week from now on) Read: Tharp, <i>The Creative Habit</i> p.45-90 Assign: Metro (due week 4)
WEEK 3 Sept. 4	<b>NO CLASS : LABOR DAY</b>	Read: <i>The Creative Habit</i> p.91-140
WEEK 4 Sept. 11	<b>VISUAL STORYTELLING</b> Harvesting details as visual dramaturgy. Elements of Design. Digital Photography lecture/discussion and demo.	DUE: Metro Assignment (turn in hard copy) Exerpt from <i>Pina</i> , and Lauenstein Brothers, <i>Balance</i> Read: Tharp, <i>The Creative Habit</i> p.141-180 Assignment: write your Creative Autobiography (Due week 6)
WEEK 5 Sept. 18	<b>TEXT ANALYSIS FOR DESIGN:</b> Breaking down stories & text. Critical analysis and methods of research. Intro to Storyboarding	In class: Quiz on Creative Habit, pair up for work on 'Breath' Due: Sketchbook Assignment #2, Autbio. Assignment: Photo storyboards Due wk7 Read: Tharp, <i>The Collaborative Habit</i> (blackboard)
*****	<b>FIELD TRIP : The Marciano Art Foundation</b> <a href="https://marcianoartfoundation.org/exhibitions/">https://marcianoartfoundation.org/exhibitions/</a> Possible dates include Sept 25, Oct 2 or 9.	Students would need to meet at the museum at 9:45am for a 10am tour. We would leave by 11:30 to be back on campus by 12.
WEEK 6 Sept. 25	<b>Visit to Architecture &amp; Fine Arts Library!!!</b> Talk with a Librarian! Critical analysis and methods of research (con't).	In class: <b>Meet at AFA Library courtyard</b> Work in groups on Breath. Due: Sketchbook Assignment #3, Creative Autobiography
WEEK 7 Oct. 2	<b>VISUAL LITERACY</b> = Lifelong research. In class: Present Photo Storyboards <i>Watch Exerpts from Objectified and Helvetica and Art 21</i>	Due: Breath Photo Storyboards - presentations Due: Sketchbook Assignment #4 Read: Bogart, <i>A Director Prepares</i> (Intro, Preface, <i>Violence</i> )

WEEK 8 Oct. 9	<b>COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES</b> Scenarios for maximizing the strengths of the group. Brainstorming, listening, and processing. Good habits and best practices. In Class: Production Meeting Exercise	Quiz on Bogart and Gillette reading Due: Sketchbook Assignment #5 Read: Jones, <i>The Dramatic Imagination</i> , Ch. 2 Take home Quiz on Jones reading.
WEEK 9 Oct. 16	<b>DECONSTRUCTION AND ASSEMBLY</b> Exercises in communicating theatrical ideas with various media and layered images. Intro to Orthographic Drawings & Scale.	In Class: Scale exercises Due: Sketchbook Assignment #6 Complete Scaled Elevation, Plan, and Section drawings.
WEEK 10 Oct. 23	<b>METAPHOR/STYLIZATION AND VISUAL VOCABULARY</b> Parallel values & understandings. Historical and contemporary iconography and its relevance to theatrical design.	Exerpts from: Gilliam, <i>Brazil</i> , Taymor, <i>Titus</i> Intro to and Assign Collage Artist presentations Read: excerpt from Myla Goldberg, <i>Bee Season</i>
*****	<b>VISIONS &amp; VOICES EVENT</b>	<b>GROUPS REQUIRED TO ATTEND ONE BEFORE OCT 30. Turn in 'QUIZ' before Nov. 6</b>
WEEK 11 Oct. 30	<b>CRITICISM &amp; CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE</b> Artist Presentations Groups and class critique events.	Due: Sketchbook Assignment #7 <b>½ of class – artist presentations!</b>
WEEK 12 Nov. 6	<b>Bee Season Project group work starts</b> Artist Presentations Groups and class critique events.	Due: Sketchbook Assignment #8 <b>Next ½ of class – artist presentations!</b> Narrative Project assigned: Bee Season
WEEK 13 Nov. 13	<b>PRESENTATION STRATEGY:</b> Verbal and visual articulation of design concepts. Choosing and preparing multi-media materials for a convincing and achievable design presentation.	Discussion Work in Class in groups for Prelim design of Collaboration Project Sketchbook Assignment #9
*****	<b>Thornton's Alcina</b> <b>Bing Theatre</b> <b>Required for FINAL PROJECT to see one performance!</b>	<b>November 15, 2017   8:00 pm*</b> <b>November 17, 2017   8:00 pm</b> <b>November 19, 2017   2:00 pm (V&amp;V)</b>
WEEK 14 Nov. 20	Work in Class in groups – Scale/Model layout Continue working with Scale Model building Demo	Sketchbook Assignment #10 Groups meet individually with teacher. Critique of prelim design presentation.
WEEK 15 Nov. 27	<b>Bee Season Projects DUE</b>	Present Bee Season models and plans, & artist inspiration Assignment: Discuss Final projects
Dec. 11	<b>Monday, December 11, 8-10am</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM:</b> <b>ALCINA PAPER PROJECTS DUE</b>

## **132a Assignments for Sketchbook/Image Library**

- 1     A)     Sketch a picture of a sign with only text visible (ex. STOP)  
      B)     On the opposing page of your sketchbook, paste an image you have found that visually communicates the meaning of the word WITHOUT TEXT
- 2     Create a collage that visually communicates the word that the instructor gives you.
- 3     Take 3 images, each one should clearly show different depth of field.
- 4     Create a portrait inspired by a work of art you admire.
- 5     Create your own image assignment. Write your directive above the image.
- 6     Adjust a photo that you took for contrast and saturation (separately). Place the original next to the 2 other adjusted images. Try to create a different visual mood than the original in the adjusted images.
- 7     Find an image that tells a clear story through visual clues. What is that story?
- 8     Create your own image assignment. Write your directive above the image.
- 9     Find, photograph, or draw two images that convey movement in different ways.
- 10    To show the impact of light and shadow, take 2 photos of the same architectural detail (place on opposing pages in sketchbook) in two different lighting situations. For example:  
      A)     during the day, in bright sunlight  
      B)     during morning or evening, dusk or dawn
- 11    Create your own image assignment. Write your directive above the image.  
  
      Find a simple small object. Draw 3 elevations of the object each in a different scale. Use 3 separate pages in your sketchbook.
- 12    Take an image that visually conveys a sound.
- 13    Create your own image assignment. Write your directive above the image.
- 14    Share a favorite research image from a production or project you have worked on this semester.
- 15    Share a favorite image from the process of creating a production or project you are currently working on.