

USC School of Dramatic Arts



Nick Cave's Soundsuits at The Fowler Museum

THTR 132a The Art of Theatrical Design

Fall 2021

Monday 10-11:50am

Location: KAP 164

Instructor: Sibyl Wickersheimer

Office: JEF 200

Office Hours: before & after class, by appt

You must make an
appointment!

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

This class is to promote the development of the artistic process and communication strategies of the individual within the environment of collaborative storytelling. By the end of class students will be able to communicate using common design vocabulary, visual tools and research methods in support of collaboration. Students will also learn how individual artists construct an artistic process in order to begin implementation of a life-long individual process for themselves. Students will practice using the above-mentioned methods and tools in group assignments; generating narrative design ideas and developing a foundation for future theatrical work.

Course Notes

Class will be taught in person, occasionally using zoom for class sessions that are lecture or discussion only. Students will be expected to silence cell phones during all class sessions and put them on table at front of the room when we are together in a classroom.

Communication & Class Meeting Information

Course announcements will be provided through Blackboard and blackboard emails. Course materials will be provided in a variety of ways as noted below. As much as possible, the materials will be posted in

links in Blackboard content folders and reading materials will be available through purchase of hard copies, online in Blackboard, or online library & ARES access. Synchronous class sessions will be recorded as much as possible. Recordings will be uploaded to Blackboard. Please do not share these recordings with anyone outside of the classroom environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Please note that you will need an operational computer to for some class sessions and work sessions. You will also be required to use Blackboard, Google Drive, Google docs and slides, and Photoshop from the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of software. Students can set up a Design lab account to use SDA Design Lab computers on campus.

USC Technology Rental Program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please submit an [USC Technology Rental Program Application](#).

USC Technology Support Links:

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Required and Supplementary Materials

Texts:

Purchase these 3 physical books or use online ebooks.

Online course materials are available on ARES through USC library.

[The Creative Habit](#), Twyla Tharp

[A Director Prepares](#), Anne Bogart

[The Art of Theatrical Design](#), Kaiome Malloy

Additional references are selected from the following texts during the course and accessible online:

[Bee Season](#), Myla Goldberg

[365 plays & 100 Plays for the First 100 Days](#), Suzan-Lori Parks

[The Collaborative Habit](#), Twyla Tharp

[Model Making: Materials & Methods](#) by David Neat

[Designer Drafting and Visualization](#), 2nd Edition by Patricia Woodbridge (required in other BFA classes)

Unbalancing Acts, Richard Foreman
The Empty Space, Peter Brook
The Dramatic Imagination, Robert Edmond Jones
The Theatrical Image by Clay & Krempel
Dream Worlds by Hans Bacher
How to Draw by Scott Robertson

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 (Abigail DeVille's Flair for the Dramatic, William Kentridge: Anything is Possible, TateShots: Olafur Eliasson 'Collective Experience', Nick Cave, Katharina Grosse....)*

Supplies

sketchbook - white paper – **no lines** – at least 8"x10" but can be larger
pencils (ideally a graphite drawing set with varying softness/hardness)
Digital camera with manual settings OR Digital Camera app (Firstlight or other, we will discuss)
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

Assignments will be readings, quizzes, project based work, and written response papers. 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 physically, or uploaded as files to specific Google Drive & Blackboard folders, as specified by instructor. When turning in files, always create a compressed pdf file under 5MB in size. Please use the following naming format:

LASTNAME _132a_PROJECTNAME_DATE

for example **WICKERSHEIMER_132a_METRO_08292019.pdf**

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignment grades will be lowered by at least one letter grade if they are not turned in by the assigned deadline. Turn in assignments by 12pm/midnight prior to the class date deadline. Attendance will affect the student's final participation grade because you cannot participate if you are not in class. If the student has more than 2 unexcused absences, overall grade may also be lowered by 10%.

Late work (assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises) shall be accepted, and a grade penalty will apply unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless

exceptional circumstances occur. Please always discuss late work with me. Communicating your challenges will always benefit you and gives me an opportunity to better support your educational experience rather than just assign a grade penalty.

Grading Timeline

Grading takes time. Please be patient, a two week turn around is likely. While you may always inquire about your grade, please do not expect an immediate response after turning in assignments. 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.**

Grading Rubric (p.8 of syllabus)

See attached guide used to determine the quality of work submitted for grading. Assignments may also have specific rubric details included in the instructor's written description of the assignment.

Grading Criteria

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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|----|--------------|
| A | 95-100 |
| A- | 90-94 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 |
| D- | 60-62 |
| F | 59 and below |

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

Assignment Grading Breakdown:

| Assignment | Points | % of Grade |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Sketchbook Assignments | 120 | 25 |
| Storyboard Assignment | 50 | 15 |
| Photoshop Assignment | 50 | 10 |
| Discussion Forums (3) | 90 | 10 |
| Artist Presentation | 50 | 10 |
| Final Group Project | 100 | 15 |
| Participation | 30 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 490 | 100 |

WEEKLY SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

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| <p>WEEK 1 Aug. 23</p> | <p>SEEING: Active and passive discovery. Inspiration. Promoting discovery and invention. What is 'the artistic process'? What is in your tool kit?</p> | <p>Start reading Tharp, Creative Habit p. 1-45, Malloy Ch 1 thru 3 Sketchbook assignment #1: recording details (page 9-10 of syllabus for list of sketchbook #s)</p> |
| <p>WEEK 2 Aug. 30</p> | <p>WORK & PROCESS 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? How might you reorganize?</p> | <p>Read: Tharp p. 45-91, How to Draw p.10-19, Malloy Ch. 6 thru 11 Sketchbook assignment #2: text to visual signage</p> |
| <p>WEEK 3 Sept. 6</p> | <p>NO CLASS : LABOR DAY</p> | <p>Watch an Art 21 Episode on PBS Suggestions include Abigail DeVille, William Kentridge, Nick Cave, Olafur Eliason, Katharina Grosse ... Discussion Forum #1 Artist Statement</p> |
| <p>WEEK 4 Sept. 13</p> | <p>VISUAL STORYTELLING Harvesting details as visual dramaturgy. Elements of Design. Principles of Composition. Digital Photography lecture/discussion and Photoshop demo.</p> | <p>Read: Finish Tharp book, Malloy Ch. 12 thru 16 and Ch. 22 Sketchbook assignment #3: sketch one object each day using different lines</p> |
| <p>Wed, Sept 15, 2021</p> | <p>EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow.</p> | <p>NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.</p> |

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| WEEK 5 Sept. 20 | VISUALIZING NARRATIVE Intro to Storyboarding and cinematic use of transitions. | In class: perspective sketching exercises from Ch. 22 Read: Storyboarding excerpts in Blackboard content folder, Dream Worlds excerpt Sketchbook assignment #4: capture or create one image that tells a story |
| WEEK 6 Sept. 27 | VISUAL LITERACY = Lifelong research. | Read: Susan-Lori Parks 365 Plays and Rugg's article (Blackboard) Sketchbook assignment #5: capture/create 3 different images that show movement Assign: Meet with partner to research and create a <i>rough storyboard</i> for a 365 Play. |
| WEEK 7 Oct. 4 | FIELD TRIP : CAAM https://caamuseum.org/ | Assign: Research and Revision of Storyboards for 365 Play, watch 'Watch me work' – SLP at Public Theatre Sketchbook #6: Use as journal for collecting research for 365 Play. Discussion Forum #2 Visual and contextual response to one art work in museum. |
| WEEK 8 Oct. 11 | COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES Maximize the strengths of the group. Brainstorming, listening, and processing. Good habits and best practices. In Class: Production Meeting Exercise Photoshop Sketching and Collage demonstration | Use Photoshop to create tonal values exploring composition in your storyboards. Read: excerpt from Dream Worlds by Hans Bacher |
| WEEK 9 Oct. 18 | Present Storyboards via Google Slides Presentation | Read: Bogart Introduction, Ch 1 & 2 Sketchbook #7, part 1: take photos of all elevations of a building near you, record/sketch orthographic information |
| WEEK 10 Oct. 25 | VISUAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES Orthographic Drawings & Scale Introduction | Sketchbook #7, part 2: Create building site information sheet |
| WEEK 11 Nov. 1 | DECONSTRUCTION AND ASSEMBLY Communicate visual information with various media and layered images. In class: Photoshop demo, basic layers, cutting/pasting | Pair with another student and swap building images/information. Sketchbook #8: sketch orthographic drawings using a proportional scale figure to help represent the size of the building. Photoshop Assignment: Create building site information sheet in an appropriate scale using Photoshop as directed in class. |

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| WEEK 12 Nov. 8 | METAPHOR/STYLIZATION AND VISUAL VOCABULARY Parallel values & understandings. Historical and contemporary iconography and its relevance to theatrical design. | Continue Scale exercises. Read: Mallory Ch. 4 & 5, 17 thru 21 Assign: Select Artist for presentation Sketchbook #9 create a portrait in the style of the artist you selected. Photoshop Assignment Due |
| WEEK 13 Nov. 15 | CRITICISM & CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE Groups and class critique events. PRESENTATION STRATEGY: Verbal and visual articulation of design concepts. Choosing and preparing multi-media materials for a convincing and achievable design presentation. | Continue Scale exercises. Brief meet with groups. Sketchbook Assignment # 10: pick an object and create a thumbnail sketch of it in 3 orthographic views (1 to 1 scale) Discussion Forum #3 Critical Response to an event/live production |
| WEEK 14 Nov. 22 | Artist Presentations | Artist Presentations Read: Malloy Ch 24 thru 28 Sketchbook Assignment #11: thumbnail sketches of object in 3 perspective views, use light source to help focus on shapes/shadows (refer to Mallory Ch. 22) |
| WEEK 15 Nov. 29 | Group work Site Model Discussion – Continue Scale work | Groups present ideas to Sibyl Sketchbook Assignment #12: use ruler and scale rule to draft 3 orthographic views of object in smaller scale |
| | Work in groups – Scale/Model/Visual layout Groups should plan to meet individually with Sibyl at least once for a progress check in during a day that is not a USC Study Day (Dec 4-7) | |
| Dec. 13 | Monday, Nov. 23, 8-10am FINAL EXAM | Group Projects Presentations |

Course Rubric : *Rubric is for all assignments.*

| Corresponding Grade | A (Excellent) | B (Good) | C (Meets Expectations) | D (Approaches Expectations) | F (Needs Improvement) |
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| Criteria | | | | | |
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| Creativity | Work is original, unique, and clever in execution of the assignment. Shows evidence of deep understanding of concepts introduced in class. | Work is generally unique and thoughtful in approach. Student exhibits understanding of concepts introduced in class and appropriate use of concepts. | Work is somewhat unique and shows a basic level of conceptual thinking. Appropriate use of concepts, but opportunities missed in engaging viewer. | Work is occasionally unique but shows a lack of conceptual thinking. Very few or no creative risks taken. Dull approach. | Work is not unique and lacks conceptual thought. Does not show original ideas. |
| Exploration of Tools and Skills presented in class | Work shows exceptional understanding of technical elements and clever application of the tools learned in class. | Work shows above average understanding of technical elements and appropriate application of the tools learned in class. | Work shows a basic understanding of technical element and some application of the tools learned in class. | Work shows little understanding of technical elements and application of the tools learned in class. | No understanding of technical elements or application of the tools learned in class. |
| Craftsmanship | Work is done with exceptional care and attention to detail. | Work is done with good care and attention to detail. | Work is done with only some care and attention to some details. | Work is done with little care and details are not considered. | Work is done carelessly. |
| Completion of project | Assignment is followed. All work is complete and on time. | Assignment is followed. Most work is complete and on time. | Assignment is generally followed. Some of the work is complete and on time. | Assignment is generally followed but most of the work is incomplete or late. | Assignment is not followed and inadequately completed. |
| Participation and effort | Work shows exceptional focus, effort and planning. Participated in all class discussions. | Work shows good focus, effort and planning. Participated in most class discussions. | Work shows some focus, effort and planning. Participated in some class discussions. | Work shows minimal focus, effort and planning. Barely participated in class discussions. | Work shows a lack of focus, effort and planning. No participation in class discussions. |

Weekly list of Sketchbook Assignments

1. See separate assignment sheet for full assignment details. Create a visual representation that documents your experience to/through/from a specific public location. Use images, words, symbols, charts, and diagrams to communicate the movement through the space that you witness. Describe what you see in an organized, thoughtful way.
2.
 - 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
 - C) Re-Design the sign to communicate the same instructions or advertisement in your own way. Metaphor and irony allowed.
 - D) Re-Design the sign completely differently, a day or two later
3. Referencing variations in line forms and textures, try using different styles of line to sketch an scene or object 2 different ways. Try to do one sketch on one sketchbook page per day of the week.
4. Create or capture an image that tells a clear story through visual clues. What is that story? Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end conveyed.
5. Find, photograph, or draw three separate images that convey *movement* in different ways.
6. Record the research you do and take your notes down into your sketchbook from the play itself, the article by Rugg, and any other articles or research you do.
7.
 - A) Take photographs of a building that you can access safely from all sides. Capture the front, back, and side views and include nearby elements that would help to determine visual scale of the building (tree, figure, mailbox, car, etc). Sketch or record into your sketchbook any details of the building that are notable. Note the location of roads or paths around the building. Create a rough 'birdseye' view to record those elements of the location.
 - B) Create building site information sheet – sketch out a rough layout of that sheet in your sketchbook first.
8. Sketch rough orthographic views of another student's building from #6 using proportional or visual scale to help you represent the accurate size of the building.
9. Create a portrait inspired by an artist whose art you admire (can use the artist you are researching). Focus on using the same elements of design and principles of composition that the original artist used to create their work.
10. Find a simple small object. Draw 3 elevations of the object each in a different scale. Use 3 separate pages in your sketchbook. Draw a 4th sketch of the object, using a digital drawing program, ie. Photoshop.

11. Continue sketching your object in different ways and in larger scale: thumbnail sketches, digital sketch using a tablet, lighting studies, perspective sketches (refer to Mallory Ch. 22)
12. Using scale ruler, draft with a pencil your object. 3 orthographic or perspective views in small scale.

Alternative Sketchbook Assignments...

13. 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
 - C) sketch the same detail using shading to convey shadow shapes
14. Take or create an image that visually conveys a SOUND.
15. Create your own image assignment. Write your directive above the image.

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

Statement 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. 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>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <http://bit.ly/sdasupport>

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776
<https://osas.usc.edu>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.