

Set Designer

- What is the role of the set designer in the theatrical production process?

■ Set designers create the world in which plays, musicals and movies take place. Set designers are very creative people who must often call upon a variety of artistic skills to do their jobs. Once they understand the world the director envisions, set designers usually sketch out all aspects of various scenes including stage construction, and how each scene makes use of costumes and various props. After sketches, set designers may go on to build scale models to further finalize plans with producers, writers and the director. They must then supervise the construction of the set, working with lighting and sound technicians, as well as costume designers, to have all pieces of the production flow smoothly. As if things were not complicated enough, set designers must often complete their tasks under a tight budget and under severe time constraints.

Scenic Designer

- Works with director in understanding the concept of the show
- Designs the set
- Appointed by the director
- Works with technical director to see that design is executed properly
- Attends various meetings with the director prior to finalization of design
- Attends technical rehearsal, and other rehearsals as needed

Set Designer Salary Range:

Entry Level Range: \$1,000 - \$10,000 per production

Mid Range: \$15,000 - \$20,000 per production

Experienced Range: up to \$80,000 per production

Technical Director

Works with scenic designer to execute the design of the show.

Oversees the building and painting of the set.

Appointed by the director.

Attends technical rehearsals and other rehearsals as needed by the directors.

Supervises crews as determined by the production staff.

Assists in the supervision of the strike.

Set Construction Crew

- Works with the technical director in building and painting the set.
- Appointed by the Technical Director.

The Set

- The set is usually the first thing people see at the start of a play, so it sets the tone for the whole performance and should be designed to make a powerful impact.
- A set designer's job is to devise an imaginative set that is also practical. He/she must keep to a budget and work within the limits of the available performance space.

Clues to the Set

- A play's author nearly always gives some clues about what the set should be like. He may describe a room in detail, or give a general idea, such as 'in a sunny square'.
- There may be elements needed to make the plot work, such as more than one door so characters can come and go without meeting for example.

Set Styles

- Within the needs of the plot, the director knows what style of set he wants.
- A symbolic set, for example, uses colours and shapes to enhance the play's meaning.
- A naturalistic set is as life-like as possible.
- An unadorned set is one that is neutral, and may offer acting levels but little to no decoration or actual scenery.

Working in the space

- The set design must suit the space in which it is to work. The size of stage, storage space and what technical equipment is available are all important.
- If the set is to tour (travel to different locations), it must be easy to set up and strike (take down) and adaptable to different theatres.

Sightlines

- Any set design has to take into account that the whole audience must be able to see. The views people get of the stage from every corner of the theatre are called sightlines, and the set must not obscure them.
- On a traditional stage, sightlines and any set design problems they pose are well-known.
- In other spaces they must be worked out each time.

Set design problems – Proscenium Arch Stage

- a traditional stage (a Proscenium Arch Stage, or picture frame stage) is quite easy to design for, as its potential and limitations soon become known to designers.
- Being original is often the main problem.
- It is also hard to draw the audience into the set as the rows of seating encourage watching rather than

Set design problems – Theatre in the Round

- In this sort of theatre, the audience sits all around a central acting space. Normal scenery would block sightlines, so scenes have to be suggested by just a few props and furniture or by lighting different areas or changing colors.

Set design problems – In a Studio

- A studio is usually a place where stage and seating can be moved to form unusual acting spaces.
- New sightlines must be worked out for each design.
- Studio work mostly has a small budget, so sets are often designed to be striking but relatively inexpensive.

The Design

material collected from
museums or libraries that are
relevant to the play's setting
may provide inspiration.

- As well as all the information mentioned already, the designer must know about set-building and materials so he/she can be sure the design is possible to realize.
- To get ideas for sets, the designer must get to know the play thoroughly and research its author and the era in which it takes place, set locations, the personalities of the play's central characters and the general mood of the play might suggest ideas for colors or themes.

Making a Model

- An important part of set design is making a scale model of the set. This gives the director, technicians and actors a chance to see what it will actually look like.
- They try to spot any construction problems or difficulties the actors might have with it before the real thing is actually built.



An Ultra Contemporary set design for Hamlet

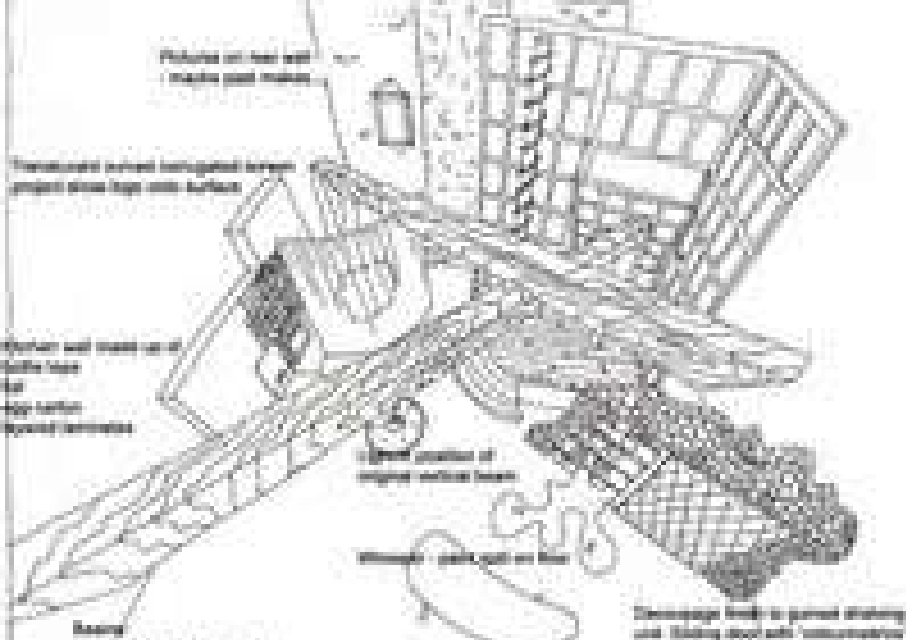


Here is an example of a
3-D set design model



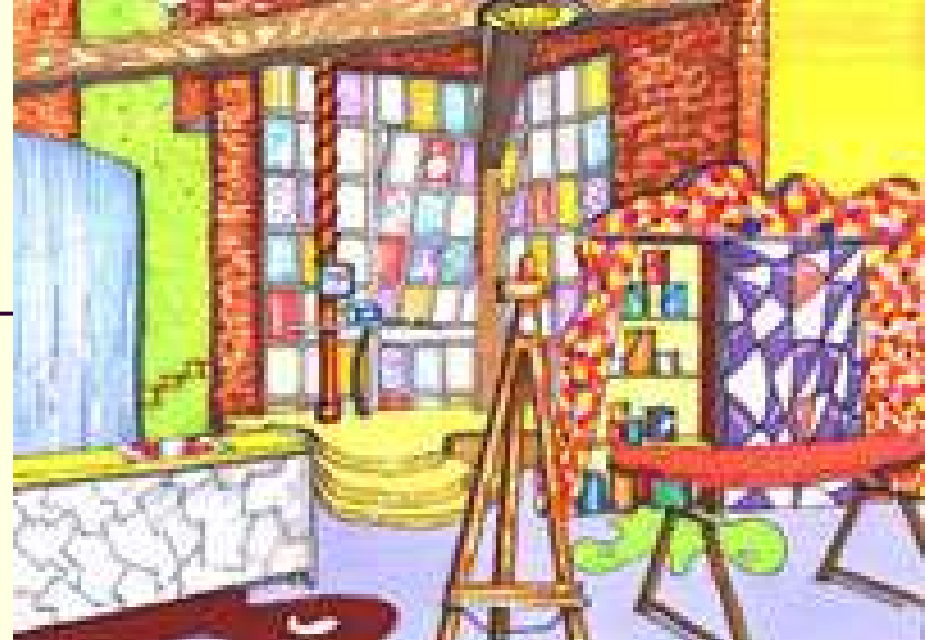
Building the actual set to
look like the model.





Above – the first drawing

Below – the scale model



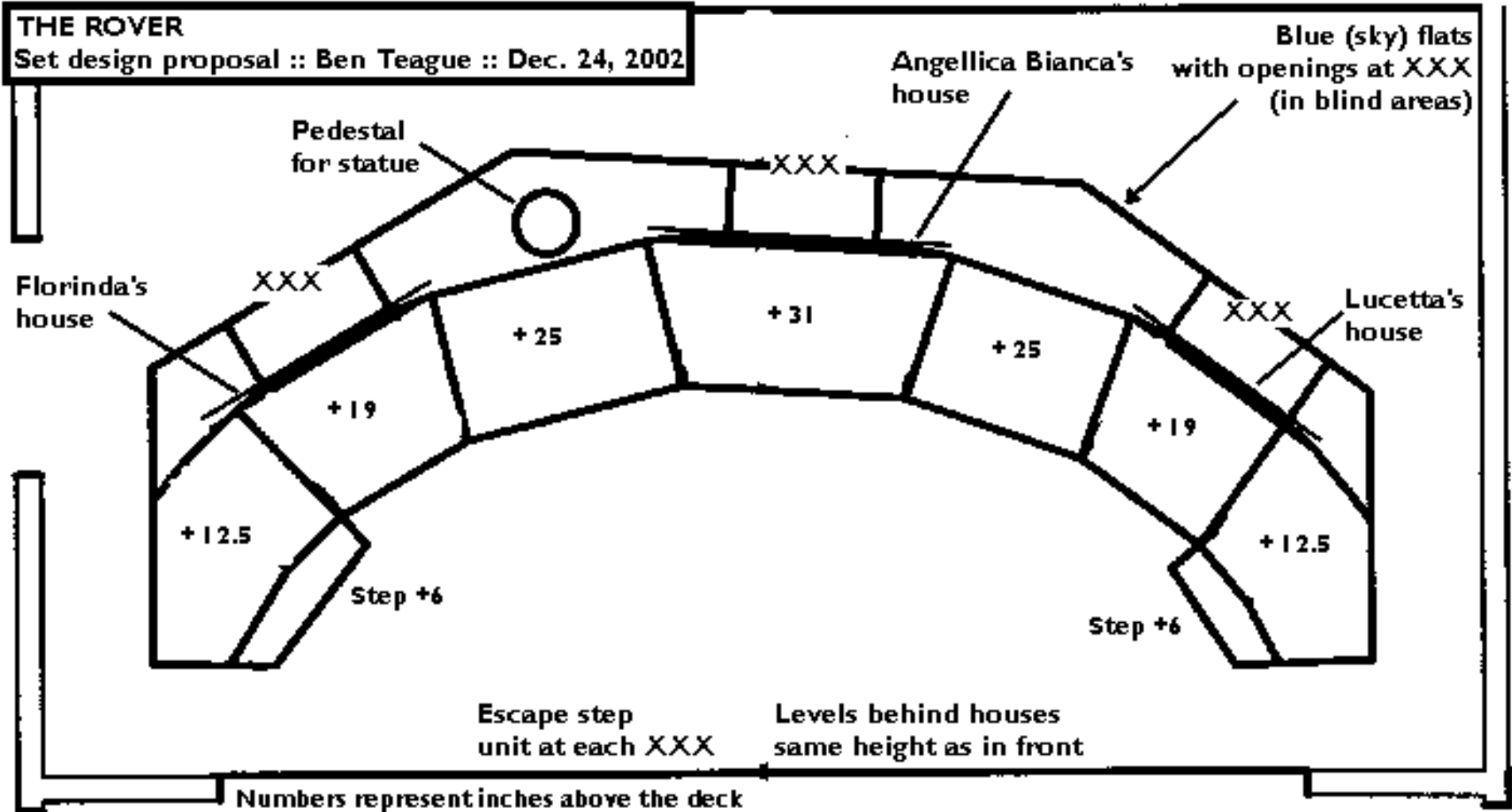
Above – the color drawing

Below – the actual set





Set model for the play
Cyrano de Bergerac



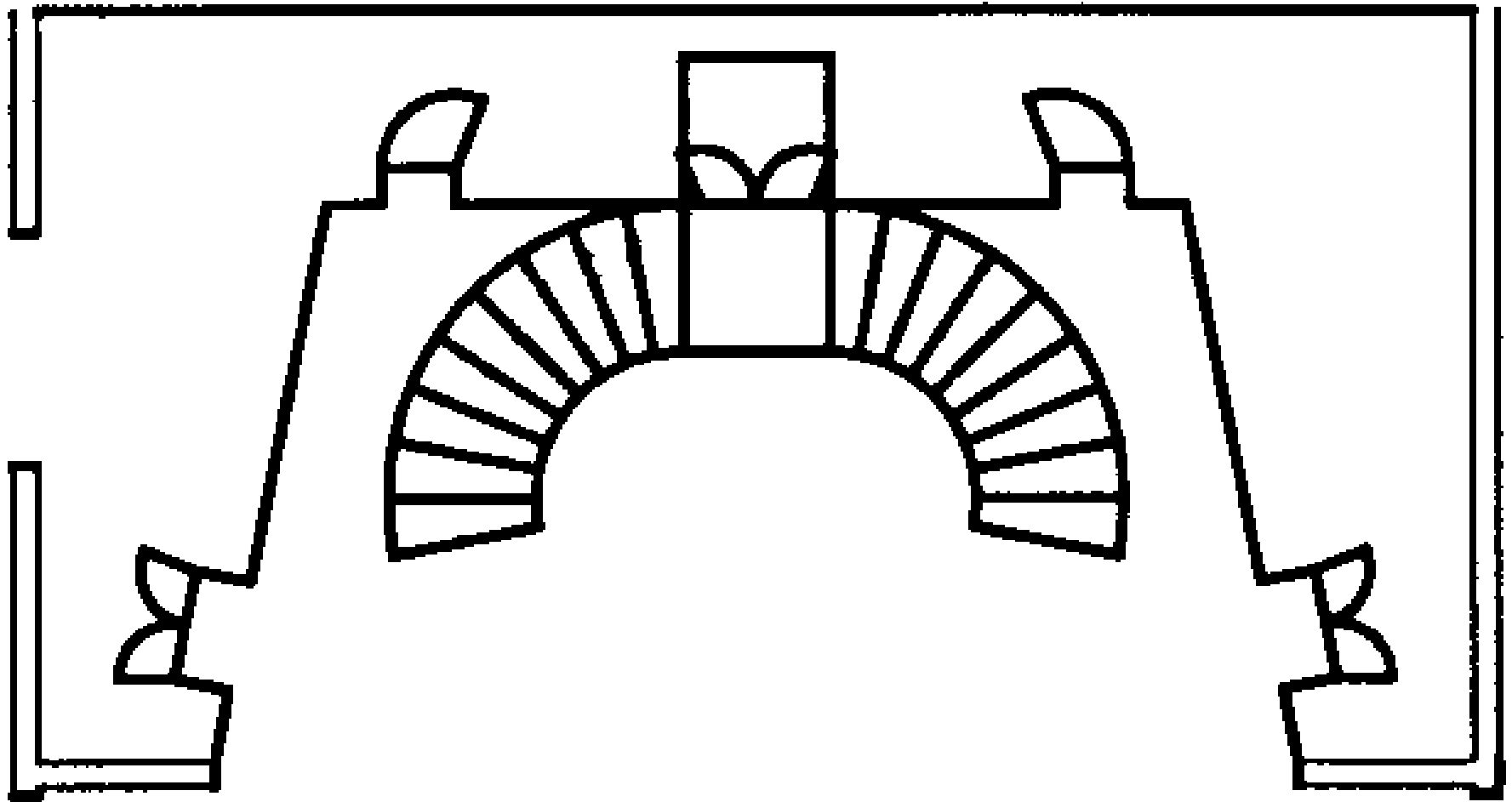
An Example of a Scale Drawing



An example of the same play's
set design model



The same play's
completed set



Steps rise 4" a time; top level is at +40"

An Example of a Scale Drawing for
Moliere's **The Misanthrope**



An example of the set design model
for Molière's **The Misanthrope**



An example of the Actual Set
for Molière's **The Misanthrope**

Your Assignment

- You have made (or are going to have to make) a scale drawing of the set for one scene of **Something's Rotten in the State of Denmark**.
- Then you are going to have to make a 3-D model of the same scale drawing. The model must show your ideas for use of color scheme for the production.