

Scenic Design for a Production of
John Dempsey's and Dana P. Rowe's *Zombie Prom*

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

Zombie Prom by John Dempsey and Dana P. Rowe was a musical theatre production presented during the fall semester of 2013 produced by The Ohio State University Department of Theatre. This thesis is a documentation of the process of scenic design for this show. The first chapters are a discussion of the pre-production elements of the project and the collaboration with the production team. Later chapters will discuss the design aspects in terms of the director's concepts, my analysis of the script, the technical aspects that brought the production to the Thurber Theater, and my evaluation of the final product. Briefly, the director's concept for the scenery was to uphold the tenants of the love of artifice, the sentimentality toward the past, and the serious intentions of "pure" Camp.

Dedication

Dedicated to my family.

You have never given up on me and that means everything.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dan Gray for his incredible amount of patience in allowing me to explore and discover my own tastes and skills of design. After which, he supplied a wealth of seasoned designer knowledge which gave my ideas life.

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Chapter 1: The Producing Situation

Director Mandy Fox presented her concept for *Zombie Prom* to the production team on February 18, 2013, eight months and twenty days before the show opened. From day one, I had nine weeks to design a functional show that was ready to be built at the beginning of the 2013 Fall semester. The budgetary allotment for *Zombie Prom*'s scenery was \$8,000.00 with an additional prop budget of \$1,500.00. My nine week journey of design began at initial research and rough concepts which developed through conversation and collaboration with the production team and evolved into a set design appropriate for the caliber of a large-scale musical. With final approval from director Mandy Fox and producer Dan Gray, my scenic design continued to develop into a design packet comprised of a colored model of the set, paint elevations and completed build drawings. Evaluating this packet of design information, technical director Chris Zinkon was able to make a proper bid on the build costs and formulate plans to execute the build in a proper timeframe. From commencement of the fall semester, the scenic build and load-in was scheduled for nine weeks as well. After the installation and completion of the set in the Thurber theater, *Zombie Prom*'s two week technical rehearsal process began with crew-watch on October 25th. Opening night of *Zombie Prom* was November 7th and ran until the 17th for a total of eight performances.



Figure 1. Thurber Theatre Audience Seating

The Thurber Theatre is a unique and challenging space that is larger than its neighbor theatre, The Roy Bowen Theatre. The seating capacity is just over six hundred seats in a continental format and does not include a balcony or inset aisle-ways (see Figure 1). The rake of the seating is gradual and does not raise far above the stage floor. The seating fans out in a broad curve which results in extreme sight-lines. The average audience member is seated 40'-0" away from the downstage edge of the apron. The Thurber orchestra pit and apron extend 11'-0" from the plaster line of the proscenium

arch. The portal of the proscenium arch is 35'-0" wide and 21'-0" tall and opens to a stage with a 49'-0" depth and wing space extending approximately 20'-0" in either direction (see Figure 3). Given the large scale of the Thurber space, it is both common and appropriate for the style of designs as well as performances to be presentational to ensure that neither are dwarfed by the space.

Thurber Theatre harbors a number of resources and amenities which include eight trapdoors in the stage floor leading to the trap room 10'-9" below the deck. I decided not to use these trapdoors by the advisement of Dan Gray, Chris Zinkon, and Scenic studio supervisor Chad Mahan. Considering that the trapdoors were underneath a layer of subfloor making it too difficult to access. This subfloor covers the majority of the playable space and terminates at the edge of the orchestra pit. By utilizing a hydraulic-powered lift, the pit can either be raised to stage level, meet the level of the audience, or lower to pit level. The apron wraps around the orchestra pit and extends 9'-0" on either side forming wing space in front of the house. This wing space includes four massive caliper doors on either side of the stage that mask lighting positions providing additional performance entrances (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Stage Right Wing with Caliper Doors and partial Orchestra Pit Lift

The Thurber Theatre stage fly system is comprised of two different types of rigging systems. Line sets one through ten are single purchase systems operated on the stage floor in the stage right wing. Line sets eleven through thirty six are double purchase systems which are operated from the pin rail 20'-0" above the stage floor. All of the line set battens are 50'-0" in length, and extend 7'-6" beyond the proscenium opening on either side. There are four motorized electrics for lighting equipment that give various heights and angles to cast light. These electrics are placed throughout the fly system in order to light the stage evenly. Downstage of the proscenium arch hangs a motorized truss suspended from a massive drive rod winch fastened to the face of the 2'-0" thick

cement wall above the portal opening.

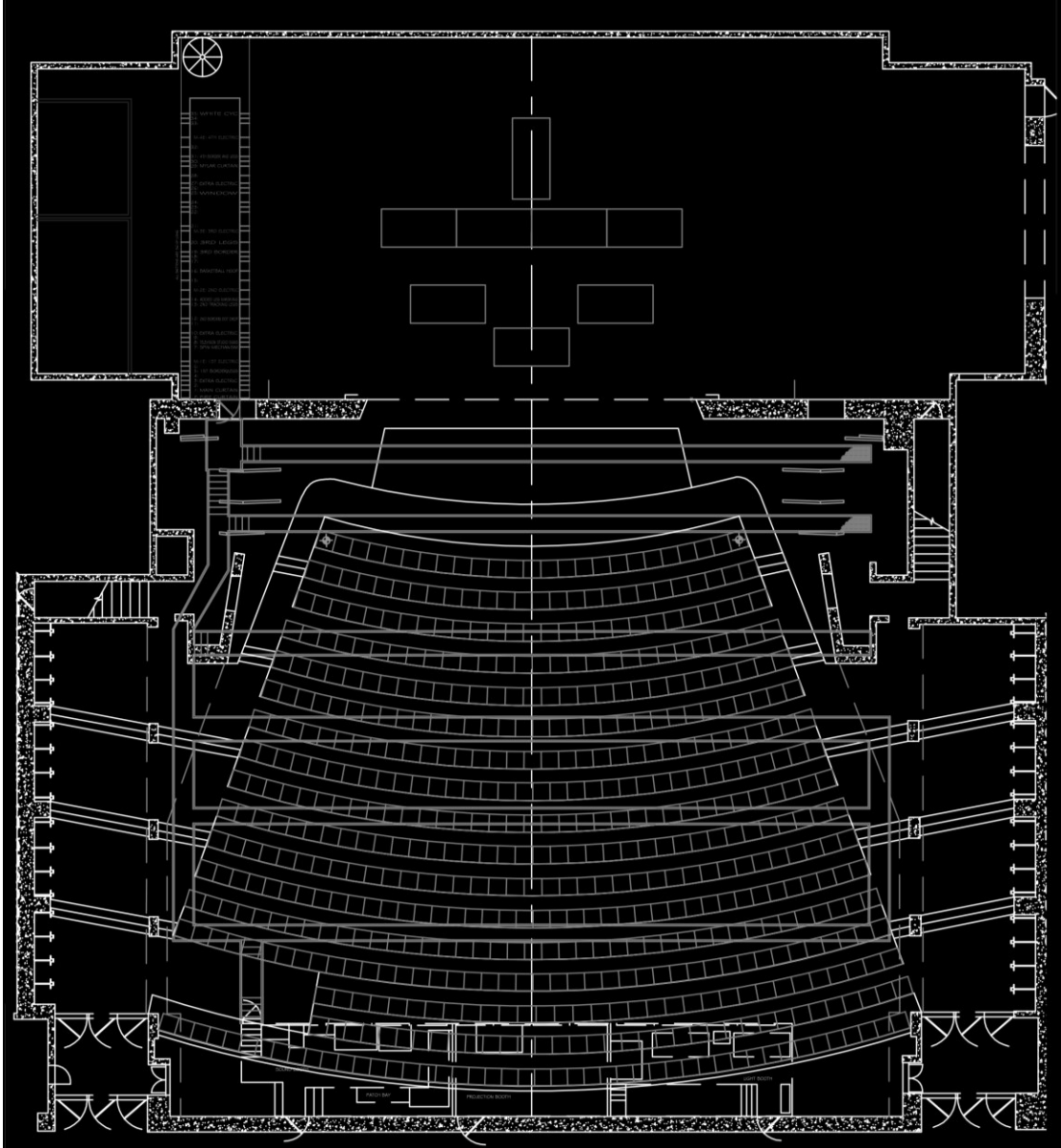


Figure 3. Stock Thurber Theatre Ground Plan

As the scenic designer of *Zombie Prom*, I was tasked with researching the frame

work and designing the physical world in the script. It was imperative that my design achieved the scope of director Mandy Fox's vision of the show. I worked extensively with Fox from the first production meeting to opening night of the show. In our conversations, Fox and I were able to produce several versions of the show's storyboards as well as flesh out details on how the scenery best served the story. Stage manager, Jen Monfort took copious notes in those meetings and documented the discussion from the work flow to opening night. Producer Dan Gray served as my mentor and adviser. He provided insight on the design demands of the show and held check-ins on the design as it developed. Costume designer Emily Jau and lighting designer Chelsie McPhelimy were prominent members in the conversations about the show. Collaboration and communication were important between these formidable designers and me. Our discussions revolved around how the world of the show was to be presented in tandem with the clothing and the lighting. An open line of communication was also established between sound designer Marta Lukacevic and myself. Yet in this relationship, I only needed to be mindful not to impede or obstruct the sound of *Zombie Prom*. I carried out discussion with both Theo Jackson the musical director and Aaron Michael Lopez the choreographer. We coordinated how the orchestra pit was to work in relation to the action of the show through scenic placement and how the performers were to work with, dance on, and move about the scenery. Chris Zinkon was the technical director for *Zombie Prom* and was an invaluable resource in ensuring that the scenery was built safely, on time, within budget, and according to my design.

Chapter 2: Synopsis and Script Analysis

Zombie Prom, music by Dana P Rowe and book/lyrics by John Dempsey, is far from the typical musical. A wildly energetic show set in America's atomic 1950s, it embraces the camp genre as well as the golden age of horror comic books. The musical score is composed of original songs with a silly 1950's sock hop feel and tuneful selection that is a tribute to the decade's hit music. The style of the script can be considered a fantasy, science fiction, or romantic comedy; but most of all it is a prime example of a show steeped in camp.

History of *Zombie Prom*

First performed in February 1993 at The Red Barn Theatre in Key West, FL, the show came from humble beginnings. The original set was designed to transform from scene to scene, because there were no options for fly space or trapdoors. The original design consisted of a picnic table with two old sets of lockers on either side of the stage. Members of the production team held multiple positions and served in a verity of capacities. For instance, composer Dana P. Rowe was the musical director for the show while at the same time he ran sound and maintained microphones. Despite the rough organization, the story and the music had a certain heart that could not be denied. According to the Key West Citizen News in Solares Hill, "This is pure entertainment

with a rock 'n roll beat. The sound is polished, the lyrics are strong...Trash becomes treasure when Rowe and Dempsey reflect on contemporary pop culture." (Raymond, 1993)

The show gradually gained momentum and was picked up by The New River Repertory Theater in Fort Lauderdale, FL in August of 1993. Composer Dana P. Rowe noticed that while in Fort Lauderdale an exciting development occurred in the audience. He observed that members of the audience kept returning for repeated shows dressed as zombies. It reached the point where, as Rowe told, they held costume competitions for the best zombie in the audience. This type of excitement and attention developed into fundraising and social events called "zombie proms". These zombie prom events were ignited by the performances in Fort Lauderdale and continue to occur presently with zombie prom's happening in places such as San Francisco, CA, Ogden, UT, Philadelphia, PA, and Chicago, IL. The excitement and attention *Zombie Prom* received by audience members in Fort Lauderdale was shared by local critics. The Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel wrote, "*ZOMBIE PROM*: Kooky, creepy, campy fun...Packed with soupy mock-'50s sock hop tunes and more teen-age turmoil than a John Waters film..." (Zink, 1993)

Dramaturg Leela Singh arranged for a talkback session to happen in the Thurber Theatre after the November 16th performance. She was able to slate associate professor and specialist of the horror genre Beth Kattelman and composer Dana P. Rowe to respond to the play and lead a discussion with the audience. Being an Ohio State University alumni, Rowe was familiar with the setting and many of the people. It was at The Ohio State University in the 1980s where Rowe started working with writer John Dempsey.

Rowe spoke about how they would trade musical jokes and sing Sondheim together in the hallways of Hughes Hall music building. From that friendship, Dempsey and Rowe decided to make a musical that embodied two of the things that they loved, zombies and high school prom. Their partnership to date has resulted in four shows. *The Reluctant Dragon* (which was never produced formally) set the duo on the path to writing the music and lyrics to *Zombie Prom*. Later, their work relationship saw the realization of *The Fix* in 1997 and *The Witches of Eastwick* in 2000. These later shows would have never been possible if it weren't for the success that *Zombie Prom* found in 1996 when it was picked up in New York. During the talkback session, Rowe recounted this important moment in the story of *Zombie Prom*'s continued success (see Figure 4).

Dana told those in attendance how he was collecting microphones at the end of one of the performances in Fort Lauderdale and was approached by an old friendly man named Natt Weiss. Weiss had seen the show and loved it. He told Rowe that he wanted to take *Zombie Prom* to New York. In disbelief, Rowe gave Weiss one of his spare cards not thinking much of it except, "Well isn't that nice." Later, Rowe found out that the old man who had approached him was indeed Natt Weiss, the man who had partnered with Brian Epstein in bringing the Beatles to America. Needless to say, Natt Weiss was a man of his word and became a key Figure in producing *Zombie Prom* in New York City.



Figure 4. Dana P. Rowe at OSU's Talk Back Session after *Zombie Prom* Performance

In February of 1995, two years after its premiere at The Red Barn Theatre, *Zombie Prom* was produced in workshop at the Lawrence A. Wien Center for Dance and Theater in New York City. While there, it received its highest recognition in the national theater community as an off-Broadway show. The New York Law Journal wrote, “Exhilarating! Sharp, spiffy, brighter and better crafted than both “The Rocky Horror Show” and “Grease” put together. It has musical wit and breathtakingly catchy, rich melodies” (Gottfried, pg.31).

Show Synopsis and Further Analysis

The musical *Zombie Prom* begins at Enrico Fermi High School, named after inventor of the atomic bomb. Loaded with sunny dispositions and candied smiles, the students at Enrico Fermi High illustrate the core values of the high school with their optimism for the future and their traditional views of the world around them. The play opens with a public announcement from the principal, Miss Delilah Strict. As the announcement ends, students appear singing about their daily high school routine in the opening song “Enrico Fermi High”.

The song opens a half hour introductory prologue that is strung together by song. We witness the daily routines of the students at Enrico Fermi High as they go through the hallways preparing for their classes. Beginning with the school's science fair in the gymnasium, it sets the tone that this high school upholds achievement above all else. They believe in the progression of man's intellect even to the point of embracing nuclear power, but they hold strong to their traditional ideals of gender roles and old-fashioned American propriety. The sun is shining on Enrico Fermi High as the student sing “Wake up every morning...” and there's a skip in their step and a twinkle in their smile that borders on superficial. The booth at the science fair for Toffee and the girls illustrates this traditional thought of gender roles with the sign reading “cooking for the fallout shelter.” Miss Strict inspects the girls' wares at their Science fair booth, and affirms their female roles as homemakers with the statement, “Remember- A nuclear attack is no excuse for... A runny egg” (Dempsey, pg.10).

Delilah then continues on to the boys science fair booth which bears the sign

emblazoned “gun racks for a safer tomorrow.” In this booth three boys hold their gun racks for Miss Strict's inspection, “excellent, superb, manly! And remember nuclear attack is no excuse for...” and the boys finish her statement with “A sloppy buttress,” as if they knew what she would say (Dempsey, pg.11).

We are then introduced to misunderstood teen-heart-throb Jonny Warner (who spells his name without the customary “h”). Instead of having a gun rack, Jonny holds up a pair of bookends. Miss Strict reacts adversely to Jonny's bookends and scorns him for doing things differently (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Enrico Fermi High Science Fair Act 1 Prologue

Toffee and the girls share gossip in the hallway and talk about their outlooks on

love. The song ends abruptly with a school-wide drill to duck and cover. Because this unique school is located near an unpredictable nuclear power plant, there are a variety of reactions to this drill that clue the audience in on the common attitude towards nuclear power plants and the Cold War situation. Some students bolt out of the hallway bellowing while others huff over how inconvenient these constant drills are. Through the chaos that ensues in the lunchroom, Jonny meets Toffee for the first time and they fall in love on the spot in the song “Ain’t No Goin’ Back.” The song is a montage of the next several months. Through this passage of time, the relationship is punctuated with holidays and events such as Homecoming, Christmas, and Valentine’s Day. This part of the show is a prime example of the pacing that *Zombie Prom* requires, namely rapid scene changes that can be described as cinematic. The show transitions from a time and place in a similar fashion as cuts found in cinema. Jonny’s and Toffee’s relationship comes to a halt when Toffee is pressured by Miss Strict and her parents to break up with Jonny. Toffee gives in to the pressure and subsequently breaks Jonny’s heart. Jonny is devastated by being dumped, and in a grand act of teenage angst, he throws himself into the main cooling tower of the Francis Gary Powers nuclear power plant (see Figure 6). He is buried at sea in international waters with the rest of the nuclear waste.



Figure 6. Jonny Jumps into the nuclear coolant tower Act 1 Prologue

Three weeks later, we see Toffee with her friends in their chemistry class. The other girls are reading about Jonny's death and begin to notice that Toffee has been upset. She tells them how sad she is and of the details of that night from her point of view in the song "Jonny Don't Go." After Toffee sings of her lament of Jonny's demise, the scene shifts from the chemistry lab to the hallway where the rest of the kids are all a twitter about this year's senior prom which is quickly approaching. As they sing "This Is as Good as It Gets," energy and excitement are practically exploding out of the kids despite Toffee's mournful demeanor. The girls insist that Toffee needs to go to the prom. In their eyes, if Toffee attends the prom, it will help her get over Jonny's death and back to caring about high school affairs as usual.



Figure 7. Study Hall Act 1 Scene 1

Conversations about the prom and Toffee being stuck on Jonny continue into study hall. (see Figure 7) The kids remain unfazed by the teen suicide and focus their attention solely on the prom. This contrasts with Toffee's frustration against their treatment of the situation. This appears to be the first moment at which a character gains clarity of the current situation. With the loss of human life weighing down on her, Toffee questions how valid such superficial cares are. Toffee and the class sing the song “the C word.” Miss Strict catches her and scolds her the moment she calls it all crap. In effort to remind her of the school's standard of excellence and the social propriety, Miss Strict has the class recite Enrico Fermi High's philosophy by having them sing “Rules Regulations

and Respect.”

After the fever pitch gospel number, Toffee finds that she is hearing Jonny's disembodied voice emanating from a hallway locker begging for her to open the door. All the while, students continue to talk to Toffee about getting over Jonny. Toffee gives in to Jonny's voice and opens the locker door as Jonny emerges reanimated and ready for love as he sings “Blast from the Past” (see Figure 8). After all the pelvic thrusting and bad boy acrobats, Toffee is overwhelmed by the whole situation and runs away from Jonny.



Figure 8. "Blast From the Past" Act 1 Scene 1

The scene changes to the news room in the headquarters of Exposé Magazine where we find Eddie Flagrante, a smooth operating reporter in search of the next big story. He finds what he's looking for when Josh, one of the students who witnessed Jonny's resurrection, arrives in Eddie's office spilling every green and slimy detail about

the undead teenager. Eddie expresses his willingness to dig deep into this story as he sings “That's the Beat for Me.”

Outside the high school, Jonny finally catches up with Toffee. Still trying to cope with his sudden resurrection, Toffee asks Jonny what it was that brought him back. He responds that it was her voice that reached him through the deep. Drawn together by the feelings they had before Jonny's death they sing “The Voice in the Ocean.” After they sing their heartfelt song together, Toffee is ready to accept that the teenage nuclear zombie in front of her was the boy she knew before. (see Figure 9) At this point, Toffee experiences a second moment of clarity and begins to embrace the core message of the show, acceptance. Jonny begins to sing about his determination to graduate in the song “It's Alive.” As Jonny sings to the rest the students in the hallway, trying to convince them and Toffee to give him another chance, Miss Strict arrives in time to stop the zombie in his tracks and publicly oppose his reenrollment. She is firm on the matter despite Jonny's sincere appreciation for Miss Strict's wisdom.



Figure 9. "The Voice in the Ocean" Act 1 Scene 3

Due to the conflict between Warner and Strict, Toffee's confidence in Jonny is shaken, and she becomes uncertain what to do next. All of the kids sing "Where Do We Go From Here?" While her friends believe that she should not take Jonny back, a number of the kids come to the defense of Jonny, believing that they are still in love with each other. This is a distinct shift in the show where the common sympathies that the characters hold are challenged and they are introduced to a new and uncharted line of thinking. This sort of thinking gives way to a moment of clarity for the kids who are willing to accept Jonny. The argument between the two groups of kids continues as the scene shifts from the hallway to the locker rooms and then onto the gymnasium floor in rapid succession. Again, these radical transitions further illustrate the speed, energy, and

timing that *Zombie Prom* requires to be a successful production. Toffee rejects Jonny's pleas to take him back. The kids ask “where do we go from here?” as they finish a massive onstage costume change (see Figure 10).



Figure 10. "Where Do We Go from Here?" Act 1 Scene 3

Josh leads Eddie Flagrante into the gymnasium and points out that Jonny Warner is “the green one.” At the very same moment of Eddie’s arrival, Miss Strict enters. A brief moment of recognition is shared between the two before they begin arguing over Jonny’s rights. As the trio sings “Case Closed”, Miss Strict is still hard-set against the zombie, but Eddie's motives begin to develop. Where once he was only interested in the story, he is now becoming more invested in the cause of the well-meaning undead orphan. This slight

shift in Eddie's motives initiates his moment of clarity. Despite of the efforts made by each of the three opponents, the song ends in a stalemate. Jonny is still determined to see high school through and Eddy believes Jonny should be able to do it; if not for Jonny's sake then for the story's sake. Miss Strict remains unmoved in upholding "rule number 7, subsection 9, of the handbook of student life, which says: no zombies, no zombies!" (Dempsey, pg. 59)



Figure 11. "Then Came Jonny" Act 2 Scene 1

In act two, the student body has grown into a frenzy of protest and picketing, singing out "Then Came Jonny," a song that reveals the conviction that the students harbor more fully regarding the reenrollment of the teenage zombie (see Figure 11).

Retaliating against her students' civil protest, Miss Strict dismantles the baseball team, cancels the pep squad, and promises that the next sign of rebellion would mean the senior prom would not be held at all. The students disperse at the prospect of a canceled prom.



Figure 12. Television Studio Act 2 Scene 2

Undaunted by Delilah Strict's unwavering opposition to Jonny Warner's reenrollment, Eddie Flagrante continues to report and bring Jonny's story to light via television during the program "Hard to Believe." The television studio entertainers invite their viewers to hear the story by singing "Come Join Us." Eddie interviews Jonny about what transpired between he and Toffee. During a commercial break, Eddie asks the studio stage manager about a certain catholic orphanage named Our Lady of Divine Masochism.

The stage manager brushes Eddie off and continues on with her work. As Eddie concludes the interview with the nervous young corpse, he asks Jonny if he should say goodbye to love. At this point Jonny exclaims that he cannot give up on love because it was Toffee's love that brought him back from his watery grave. He then takes to the stage armed with a microphone and a yearning heart for the girl of his dreams. He croons "How Can I Say Goodbye?" in hopes that Toffee sees him (see Figure 12).

In her bedroom, Toffee is love-struck by Jonny's broadcasted display of affection on all three channels. Yet, it is prom night and she finds herself struggling to focus on her schoolwork with Jonny's song fresh in her mind. She sings "Easy to Say," a song about her worries and about her true feelings for the zombie in her life. The girls all call her on a party line. After she comes to terms with her feelings about Jonny, she becomes dedicated to loving and accepting him for what he is, fully embracing her third moment of clarity.



Figure 13. Miss Strict's Office Act 2 Scene 4

Hours before the prom begins, Eddie finds Delilah in her office on the PA system and begins to flirt with her in the song “Exposé.” Through his advancements and their conversation, their history is finally revealed. They were lovers in high school. They reminisce about their feelings for each other and all of their adventures as high school seniors (see Figure 13). Both feel as if they were abandoned by the other but are still caught up in the attraction of old flames. As Miss Strict tentatively interacts with Eddie, there is a faint moment of clarity where the audience can see who she really is beneath her cold exterior. Passion rises to a point at which Delilah realizes what's going on and rushes out of her office.

Prom night finally arrives as all of the students prepare and sing about their hopes and anxieties for what prom might be like for them. Everything is new and exciting, as

they gaze in wonder at all the decorations hanging in the gymnasium. There is a prolonged moment of wonderment as they sing “Isn't It?” 'Our atomic prom: an evening of miracles and molecules' is the theme of a night that none of them would soon forget. There has been a lot of controversy and conflict centered on prom and all of the students are anxious to see how everything transpires.



Figure 14. "Delilah's Confession" Act 2 Scene 5

Toffee arrives at the dance looking for her zombie boyfriend. Jonny approaches Toffee from the crowd and embraces her as she tells him how she really feels. It's a magical prom moment of teenage love and zombies. In the song “Forbidden Love,” they sing of their love for each other, which gets to the core theme of the show. It's best to love

and accept everyone, especially those who are different than you. In order for mankind to really progress the way that Enrico Fermi High desires, we can't only hold to traditional values and to our own accomplishments but have a more open view of the world and be more accepting of all those around us, even the freaks and zombies.

Unfortunately, Jonny's arrival at the prom does not go unnoticed as Miss Strict makes a scene in the middle of the dance. "The Lid's Been Blown" is sung as Eddie confronts Delilah before she can drag Jonny out the doors of prom. Miss Strict is then pushed into revealing her past where she sings "Delilah's Confession" (see Figure 14).

Miss Strict begins an expository monologue about dating a boy from the wrong side of the tracks despite her mother's wishes. On the last night that she and Eddie shared, they ditched their own prom and parked between the Burma-Shave signs on the old highway. There, in the back of old man Flagrante's Studebaker, the two conceived a baby. As soon as Delilah's parents found out, she was sent off to a home in Santa Fe to give birth. Her infant son was taken away from her and sent to an orphanage. Having divulged her history and what had caused her to become the overbearing principle that she is, Miss Strict again attempts to escort Mr. Warner out of the senior prom. Flagrante stops her again telling her he wouldn't do that and she demands to know why she shouldn't. He then reveals the biggest surprise of the show. The baby that they had conceived all those years ago. The boy that was taken away from Delilah was the very same undead boy that she was attempting to remove from the prom. Eddie had investigated the orphanage that he inquired about earlier and had found undeniable proof that Jonny Warner was indeed their long-lost son. Overjoyed by the reuniting of the family that was taken from her,

Delilah Strict allows the senior prom to continue. The curtain falls after one last song of “*Zombie Prom*” which punctuates the end of an energetic and campy story of love, acceptance, and zombies (see Figure 15).



Figure 15. "Zombie Prom" Act 2 Scene 5

Chapter 3: The Initial Research and the Evolution of the Design

In my preliminary research, I found it important to strike a balance between the propaganda of the 1950s era and the happy-go-lucky attitude often attributed to that decade. As I looked through the decorative lines and the motifs of the 1950s, I found it had not only a stylized quality, but one that was very playful and appropriate to the world that I wanted to create. The world of *Zombie Prom* is unlike any other world in that it embraces a quirky thought process and way of life to such a degree that the first question that's asked when a zombie comes back from the dead is not how it happened but more so should it have the right to go to school. With this bizarre mindset, a balance must be struck in order for my design to be effective. In my research, I delved into architecture and decorative style sensibilities of the 1950s as a jumping off point for my design for *Zombie Prom*.

While researching I was drawn to the retro-futurism of the 1950s era. Qualities of this aesthetic involve jet stream lines, swooping curves, a 1950s color palette accented with chrome or white, and more importantly a grand scale of thought that harbors hopefulness for the future which runs parallel to the attitude held at Enrico Fermi High (see Figure 16). As I read the script and watched the movie of *Zombie Prom*, I was struck by the design approach of the movie, namely the visuals associated with graphic novel of the era.

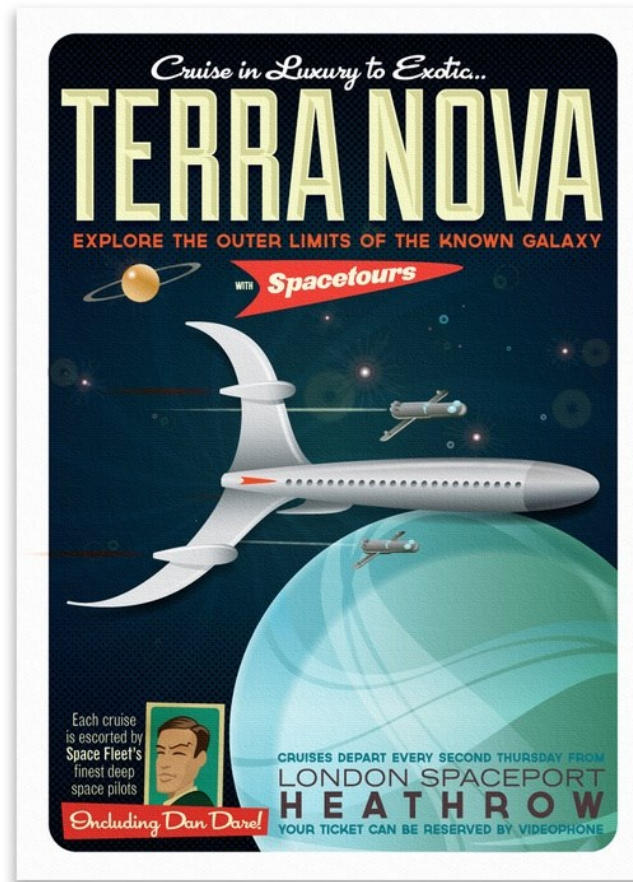


Figure 16. Neal McCullough. (Artist). Dan Dare
Travel Poster [Web Drawing].
Retrieved from
<http://www.creattica.com/posters>

I made a goal for my design to harbor these distinct qualities of the 1950s. I aimed to keep it fresh and relevant while retaining its nostalgia at the same time. My approach embraced design ideas drawn from a timeline ranging from the 1940s to 2014. Because the play was written in the early 1990s, the music in *Zombie Prom* has a dated feel in its

styles and musical genres which gives the score a hybrid status. The range of music style found in the show includes but is not limited to Jazz, rockabilly, ballads, and gospel.

Zombie Prom's hybrid characteristics encourage me to adopt and exaggerate the strong and refined lines of the 1950s. It also explains my attraction to pop art found in late 1950s and the early 1960s, including pieces by Ohio State alumni and leading figure in the new art movement, Roy Liechtenstein. He took the process of printing for graphic novels and advertisements at that time and morphed it into his own art form (see Figure 18).

Defining the basic premise of pop art through parody, his work favored a tongue-in-cheek humorous sensibility. The use of Ben-Day dots is prevalent in many of his designs. The Ben-Day dots printing process is a technique dating from 1879, and is used to inexpensively create shading and secondary coloring by the optical illusion of dots layering a color field (see Figure 17).

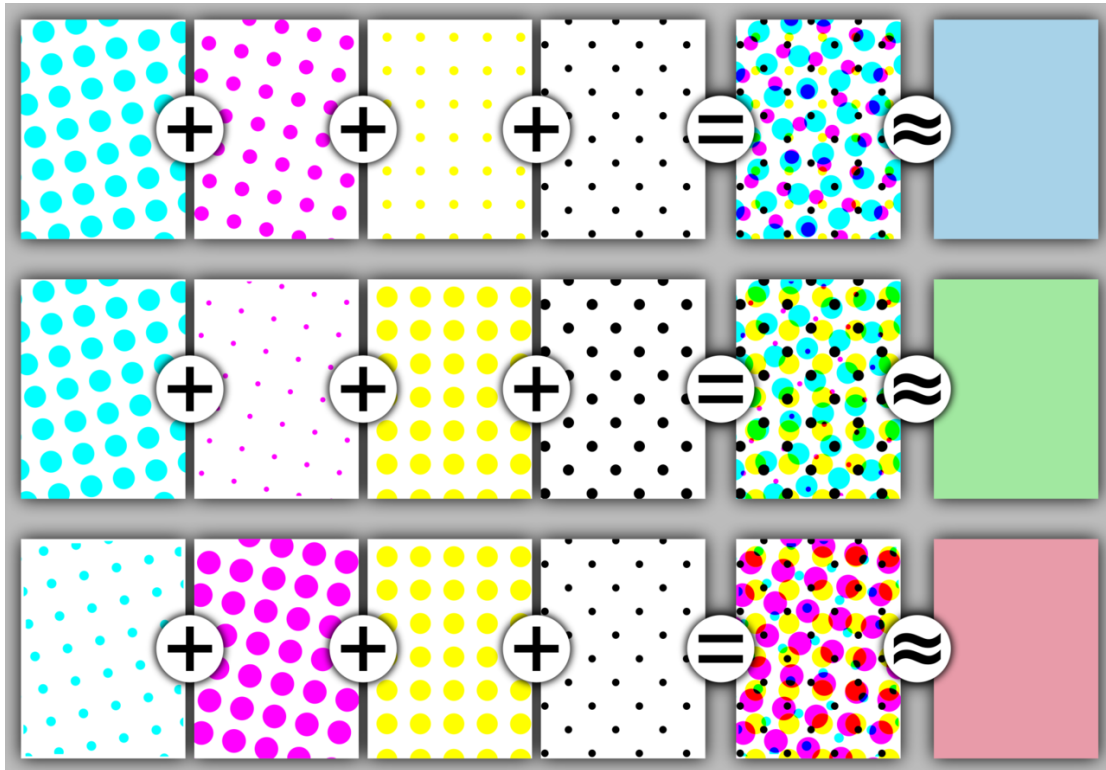


Figure 17. Design, A. (Producer). (2011, September 05). Creating a Four Color Process Separation White Printer In Photoshop [Web Graphic]. Retrieved from <http://www.printexmag.com/main/apparel-design>

A precise composition of forced perspective, dynamic balance, hard graphic lines and this Ben-Day dot technique captured my attention as I researched Roy Liechtenstein's work. After grasping the true nature of the show, I instantly gravitated towards these sensibilities. My initial research reflected these qualities of Roy Lichtenstein's work, which strike a balance between the darker connotations of the nuclear era propaganda and the candied superficial disposition of the 1950s.



Figure 18. Roy Lichtenstein. (Artist). (1965). Girl with Hair Ribbon [Print Graphic]. Retrieved from <http://www.lichtensteinfoundation.org>

With the exciting discoveries I was making in my research I knew that I needed to use the script and music as the travel guide though this world built by the writer John Dempsey and the composer Dana P. Rowe. I paid specific attention to the location of the scenes as they unfolded and proceed in telling the story. I knew that in order to have an appropriate design I needed to acquire extensive research on high schools of the era. With their conservative architecture and their requirements of functionality, high schools tended to have an institutional and foreboding feel. Hard rectilinear lines, dull color palettes, and exposed fixtures which speak of the notion “function over form.” The reality

of high school design contradicted the design sensibilities I endeavored to create. I knew that by exploring the basic design elements found in high school facilities and infusing them with the energy of a youthful student's excitement for life, I would compose a design that combined these opposing qualities (see Figure 19). I felt that these two aspects of the nature of high school paralleled the contrast between the hopeful outlook of a brighter tomorrow and the constant fear of nuclear attack during the Cold War. I researched bomb drills and prom parties. I researched hall decorations and gas masks. I researched the wonders of futuristic 1950s and the bland architecture of high school. As a result of taking all these things into account, I realized that exciting things were happening in the 1950s. Things such as the advancement and promise of nuclear power. Television was extremely impactful to the 1950s lifestyle opening up an exciting new

method of communication and entertainment.

As I continued to revisit the pool of research images that I had collected, I began to list all of the elements included in the script scene by scene, allowing me to build an effective scenic breakdown. While listing the needs and challenges found in the text on one page, I explored possible solutions on the opposite page with thumbnail sketches (see Figure 20). Starting off, I endeavored to capture the graphic and futuristic feel through the techniques of forced perspective. These techniques seemed to play well with the simple lines of 1950s architecture as well as those found in the panels and borders of graphic novels.



Figure 19. Deirdre Logue (Photographer). Worry [Web Photo].
Retrieved from <http://www.mikehoolboom.com/?p=57>

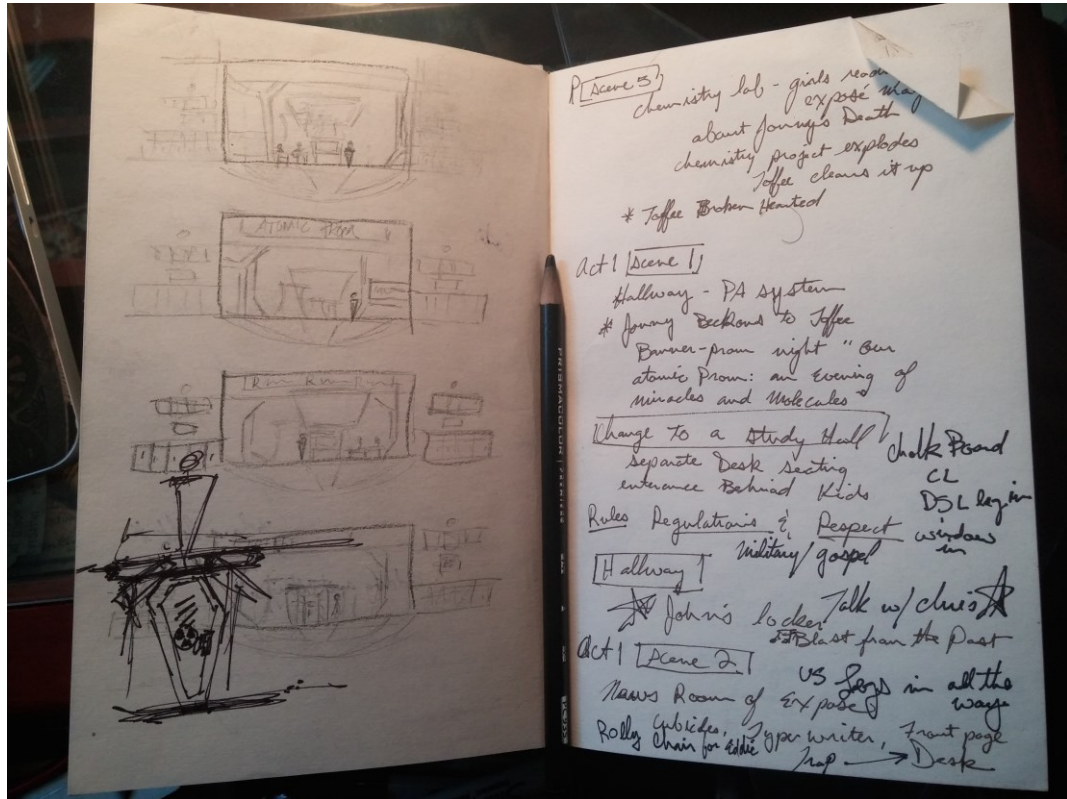


Figure 20. Image of My Note Taking and Thumbnail Process while Reading through the Script.

The initial set design also incorporated many features that I am not overly fond of. For instance, I intended to mimic the inverted triangles of the fallout shelter symbol in the negative and positive spaces of the front elevation. It seemed like a clever idea, but became weak in its application due to its reliance on the negative space of the ramp passing down front of the stage into the obstructed view of the audience. Also, the dramatic, angular lines clashed with the confined functional lines of the banks of lockers on either side of the proscenium (see Figure 21). I had intended for these lockers to track from their position on the extreme wings of the apron to the center of the stage. The

reason for the mobility of the lockers was to accommodate the numerous transitions from one location in the show to the hallway and then back to an entirely different location. This reasoning worked against me by constantly drawing the attention of the audience to center stage where all of the major scenic shifts would occur.

In the initial design for *Zombie Prom*, one of the prominent features of my rough design was the incorporation of automation for a massive turntable with a hydraulic lift in the center. It was a very lofty goal to include this sophisticated scenic piece into *Zombie Prom*, but I was fixated on the movement I saw in my mind's eye when I read the show. I saw a movement that mimicked the revolving floor of a 1950s car show or a record player (see Figure 21). Another reason that it felt appropriate to incorporate such a sophisticated system was that Chris Zinkon, the technical director wanted to explore and implement automated scenery into the OSU season. Not knowing if I would be able to get another chance to work with automated scenery, I made a concerted effort in designing the turntable with a hydraulic lift in the center.

commented that my design was too horizontal, a quality more appropriate for a thrust space than this large proscenium theatre. The Thurber Theatre calls for a vertical design canvas that reins in the action, localizing it to ensure it is not overwhelmed by the sheer size of the space. Anything you see on the Thurber stage floor while seated in the audience is just a sliver of colors. My tendency to design a set predominantly on its horizontal canvas only serves to dramatize the evolution of my initial sketches to my final design of *Zombie Prom* on its vertical canvas. A notable issue that lighting studio supervisor, Matt Hazard pointed out was that my composition of the scenery was too symmetrically balanced. This symmetry was contrary to the odd nature of Dempsey's and Rowe's world of atomic zombies of the 1950s.

In attending meetings with Dan Gray and with Mary Tarantino, I took to heart the advice they gave to me to embrace the odd nature of the show by using 1950s motifs. Dan Gray counseled me to continue adopting the qualities of jet stream lines and color palettes into the incorporation of boomerangs and starbursts and other decals common in the 1950s. With this encouragement, I took bolder steps in a new direction.

While sitting in the last row during a lecture at the 2013 USITT conference, I sketched and re-sketched ideas emphasizing a vertical design using these motifs as an answer to the challenges I was having. As I sat in that lecture hall scribbling out page after page, my final design direction materialized on the page and jumped out at me (see Figure 22). In that moment all of the uncertainty, all of the grasping and exploring for a definitive direction yielded for a new and exciting line of thinking. I had captured an idea that upheld the advice of Mary Tarantino and Dan Gray by making the proscenium into a

gigantic boomerang with atomic starbursts mounted on either side in asymmetrical balance. This idea embodied the fun movement of graphic novels, teenage love, and the spiffy sensibilities of the 1950s.

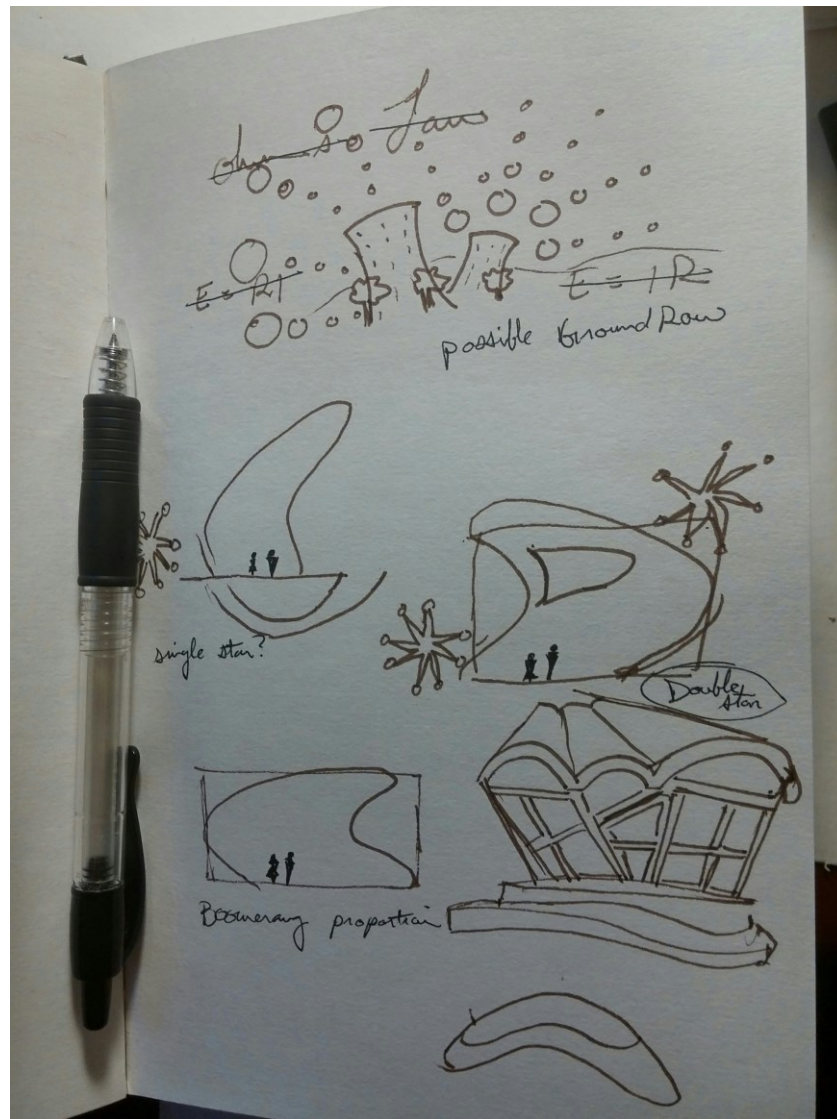


Figure 22. Sketches of the Boomerang False Proscenium at its Inception.

With the advent of the boomerang false proscenium, it was only a matter of time before the hydraulic lift and the turntable were phased out completely. Considering the expenses, time demands, and the skill level of those involved, the production team and I determined that both the turntable and the hydraulic lift were not effective and appropriate designs for the world that director Mandy Fox and I were looking to create. While some set pieces were cut, room was made for other set pieces to become more prominent. The lockers became stationary on either side of the stage, allowing for the action to move off into the front apron wings, to draw focus away from the center of the stage to facilitate rapid scenic changes.

The hydraulic lift stayed under consideration longer than the turntable. The original reason I incorporated the lift was to use it as a tool for a heightened sense of emotion in specific moments during the play. The moments included: when Jonny and Toffee fell in love for the first time, when Miss Strict and Eddie rekindle their love, and at the very end of the show when all the main characters embrace as one big nuclear family. Yet, throughout that process, producer Dan Gray and the other members of the design team challenged me to find a way to justify such a sophisticated piece of scenery. In an attempt to stick to my decisions, I endeavored to find those justifications in order to keep the hydraulic lift as part of the design even so far as to use the lift as a table surface for chemistry lab, cafeteria, and office as well as the casing for Jonny's locker. In relation to Jonny's locker, I planned the lift to include a hollow shaft in order for it to rise from the floor in a spooky over-the-top manner, adding to the campiness of the show. Despite finding justifiable occurrences in the show to keep the hydraulic lift, the production

team's decision inevitably came down to budget, scale, and time. Considering these restraints, the hydraulic lift was considered ineffective for the show's scenery that Fox and I were developing and was cut in the pursuit of a better idea.

In meetings with Fox, we discussed how we could keep as much attention and energy as close to the audience as possible in order to breakup the monotony of the center stage performance and encourage an energetic connection between the audience and the performers. Not only did the location of the lockers change, but also the ramp that wrapped around the orchestra pit adjusted from being part of the fallout shelter symbol a continuation of the line of the boomerang portal.

I must say that throughout the process of designing *Zombie Prom*, I have learned a lesson about being adaptable and considerate to the litany of needs and requirements of a show and the limitations of its budget, scale, and schedule. In my designs for other shows, things consistently worked out with what I had been given. In these designs, not only had there been compromises, but problems were solved easily without the need for radical changes to my designs. It's quite easy to lose track of the appropriate design and to ignore what the show really needs, in pursuit of what you think your thesis really needs.

The communication among lighting designer, Chelsie McPhilimy, director, Mandy Fox, and me was effective in regards to the creative process. Every Monday afternoon, I would meet with Fox and discuss elements of the scenery. After our meeting, McPhilimy would arrive for her appointment with Fox and we would discuss how the show would work from top to bottom with each little design element picked apart, analyzed, and

discussed until we felt we were ready to continue comfortably and professionally.

Through the early design process of *Zombie Prom* and into later developments, there was a sense of urgency that worked against us. It seemed as though all of us were preoccupied with many other projects that were happening at the same time. In the early stages of the design process, I was in the middle of tech week for an OSU devised production of *aPOEtheosis*. I assisted in the set design and co-designed the media for the production. I also began to work with Actors Theatre of Columbus on designing three shows for their summer stock season, which involved meetings with the directors and beginning the design process for each of the shows. I don't feel my involvement in these other projects greatly detracted from my attention to the *Zombie Prom* design, but I am sure it had some effect nonetheless. It seemed as though the other designers and Fox were in the same type of circumstance of dealing with a number of other projects and shows. The difficulty I felt was not specifically the work load but was more related to keeping everything in perspective. Many of these conversations and meetings were so extensive that they often led into lunch. We discussed and storyboarded through many versions of a show that was not going to be mounted for another seven months or so. I'm fully aware that my design process tends to push the boundaries of deadlines. Yet, because this was my thesis, I was bound and determined not to fall into these tendencies and apply what I had learned in this process to my future design career.

By the ending of Spring semester, I had finalized drafting, built my white model, and made several storyboarding documents from sessions held with Mandy Fox. The final storyboarding session before the beginning of summer was attended by Mandy Fox,

Chelsie McPhilimy, and stage manager, Jen Monfort. We sat down in front of the model box on the Thurber Stage and went scene-by-scene through the scripts discussing how the show was going to move, and what other issues we needed to sort out in order to be ready for Fall semester. Unfortunately, I wasn't at the point that Dan Gray had hoped I would be. Everything was to be finished by the commencement of summer, including finalized drafting, colored models, paint elevations, a prop list, and storyboarded documents. Fortunately, Dan Gray was understanding and allowed for the paint elevations and the color model to happen at a later point in the Summer.

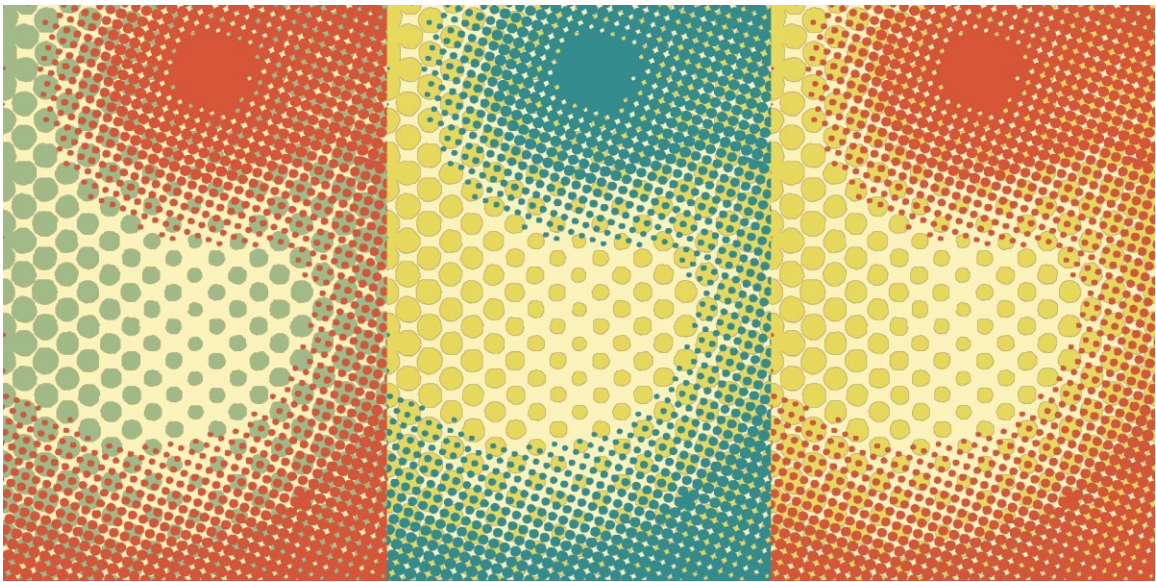


Figure 23. An Exploration with Color Swatches of 1950s Palette arranged in Ben-Day and Halftone Dots.

The color palletes for *Zombie Prom* were simple enough to acquire because the process consisted of selecting a number of 1950s color palettes, finding similar prominent

colors, and pairing them together in a way that I found appropriate and visually appealing. I knew I needed to be true to the hue and temperature of each color found on these palettes to hold to the authenticity of the 1950s tastes and sensibilities. But I was able to flex my creativity by arranging the colors and pairing them with complementary colors and other colors to my satisfaction. In my research of the color palettes of the era, I found that the dusty rose went nicely with turquoise as well as the avocado green. I found the cream orange and the gold would go well with the pale yellow and the dark steel blue.

Many other colors were incorporated into the set, yet we made the decision to limit the use of green to all things nuclear in order to emphasize the fact that Jonny was the only different character and the centerpiece to the show. This was a challenge as I continued to develop my design, because limiting an entire hue seemed counterproductive to the possibilities of the design for the world. Restraining the use of green in *Zombie Prom* was tricky. Yet despite my initial reaction to costume designer Emily Jeu's proposal, I did my best to fulfill my end of the show's overall design in relation to this idea. Though I feel it is still a pity that green wasn't prominent in the vivid variety of color found in the world, we were able to collaborate and compromise in order to maintain a greater continuity of all the design elements.

Chapter 4: The Production Process

In a production meeting, before the summer break, we agreed that I was scheduled to come in to the scenic studio two weeks before the start of the fall semester in order to paint the curved border and half-drop (see Figures 24 and 25). The reason for this decision was the unique paint treatment and nature of these two scenic pieces. Because they were used as masking for lighting instruments, producer Dan Gray made the suggestion to back-paint each piece. With the incorporation of a considerable amount of stencil work to achieve the large-scale halftone dots and Ben-Day dots, experience dictated that a larger block of time be set aside in order for these two prominent set pieces to be finished. Because they spanned the entire proscenium opening and extended into the wings to mask sight lines, both pieces were designed to an overall length of 50'-0", which is too large to fit on the 48'-0" wide paint frame located in the studio. The only area big enough to facilitate both of these pieces was on the stage floor of the Thurber Theatre. Because that was valuable real estate, we needed considerable planning in order to avoid disrupting the existing schedule for the Thurber Theatre. The production team guided my decision making by suggesting things to consider to keep the work as convenient and easy as possible. With the custom curve at the bottom of each spanning drop, Dan Gray suggested a pocket be included along the bottom of each arc in order for a thin metal rod to slip in and stretch out the wrinkles of each piece from the bottom edge. With how large

and nonlinear each arc was designed, Chris Zinkon opted for both drops to be fabricated by Rose Brand (a company specializing in theatre products and the tailoring of large custom pieces of fabric). I arrived on August 3rd, two weeks before School officially started, in order to prep, stretch and paint both of these large drops.

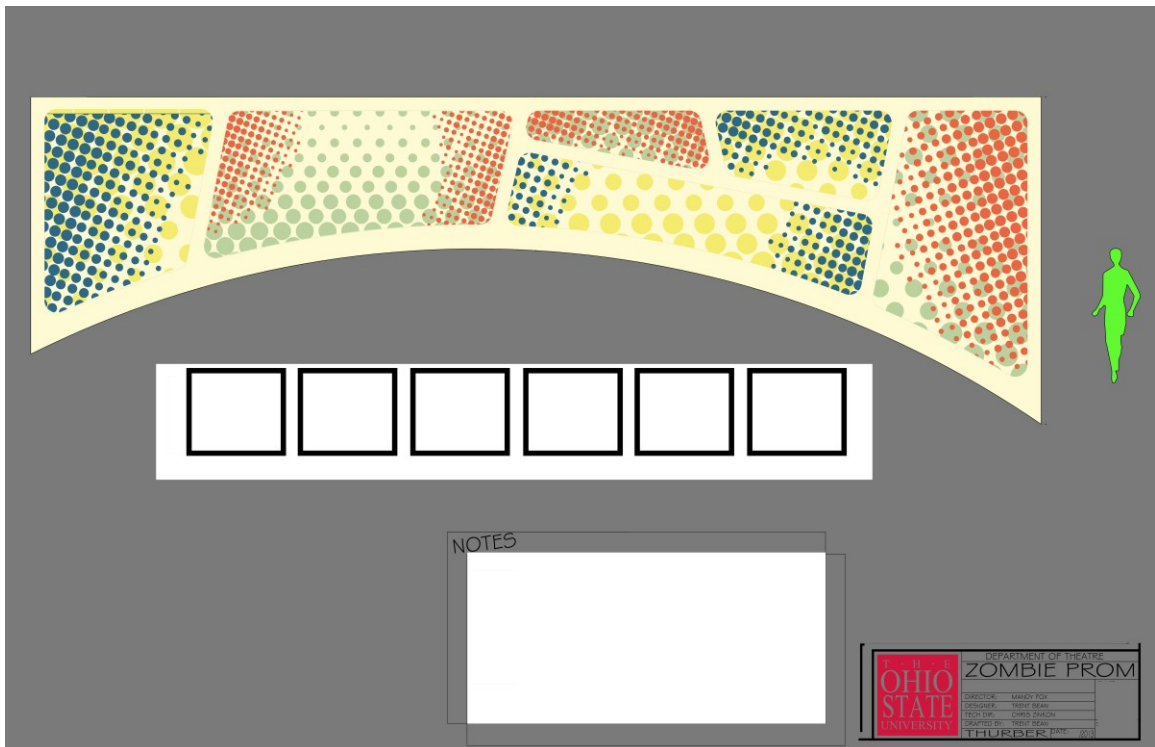


Figure 24. Paint Elevation of the 1st Border.

Having corresponded with Chris Zinkon through e-mail concerning the schedule of space, the availability of the tools and the arrival of the drops from Rose Brand, I knew I needed to do a considerable amount of work in a short timeframe. Unsure where to begin, I followed Zinkon's suggestion to roll out several long strips of bogus paper to

spare the floor from the paint that would bleed through fabric. After fixing the paper down with a few strategically placed staples, I unfolded the canvas of the curved border and stretched it across the bogus paper with the backside facing up. With the bone crawler (a body cart commonly found at automotive shops) I proceeded to crawl along each edge pulling the wrinkles and slack out of the middle of the border and aligning the webbing to the straight edge of the stage floor. I included a fan bridge on either side of the border to facilitate a quicker drying time and to avoid as much sticking to the floor as possible.

After I was confident that all of the slack was pulled out and that each edge was stapled evenly and firmly, I mixed leftover paints to a satisfying neutral gray for back-painting saving money on paint. I made sure the consistency of the paint was thin enough to be rolled onto the surface with relative ease as well as opaque enough to close up the open threading of the raw fabric. After rolling on the first coat of back-paint, I set fans at each fan bridge in order to force air between the painted border and the ground. While the border was set to dry, I pulled a number of styrene sheets in order to make effective stencils that would help layout and paint all of the dot work. I arranged the sheets in a way that would fit several rows of dots as they radiated down a centerline. Using a marker I drew the radius of every dot, which I then cut out using a carpenter knife. As the paint dried on the border, I would alternate between cutting out stencils and laying down a coat of paint.

I reached the point where I pulled up the border in order to paint the front side. Unfortunately, as I did so, I quickly realized that the bogus paper that was placed in order

to protect the stage floor from the paint that seeped through the fabric was coming off in large sections and sticking to the face of the curved border. Knowing that the paint treatment was brightly colored and flat, the texture of the bogus paper residue was unacceptable. I decided to immediately address the problem by stretching out and fixing down the edges of the border, then scrubbing off every section of bogus paper residue. I found that soaking the areas with warm water and firmly scouring off the fuzz was the most effective way. After working on my hands and knees for an additional couple of hours in order to resolve this problem I decided that I wasn't going to use bogus paper during the rest of the process. I swept off the debris and residue that I had scraped up and continued to apply the base coat on the show side of the border. Through alternating between applying this coat of paint and cutting out circular holes in the styrene sheeting, I finally arrived at the point where I could begin stenciling the halftone and Ben-Day dots in their specified arrangement on the border (see Figure 24).

Beginning with the larger scale halftone dots, I aligned the stencil sheet to the line that I had snapped onto the surface of the border. When I was satisfied with the placement of the stencil, I proceeded to lightly and evenly roll the pale green and the mustard yellow paint in order to form the array of dots that I was looking for. In prolonged concentration, I paced myself as I went along, keeping the dots in proper alignment as they radiated out. After a couple of applications of paint through the stencil, I would have to clean off the paint residue that would build up around the edges of every hole. I found a rhythm and feel for the process of laying dots and it took less time as I went along. After the larger dots had dried, I proceeded to apply the dark blue and dusty rose dots using smaller scale

stencil. Because these dots were smaller and closer together, this application added a tone and depth to the large dots below that effectively made the Ben-Day dot technique jump out. Upon reaching a finishing point with the border, I removed it from the floor with care and folded it up for storage, then I began work on the half-drop.

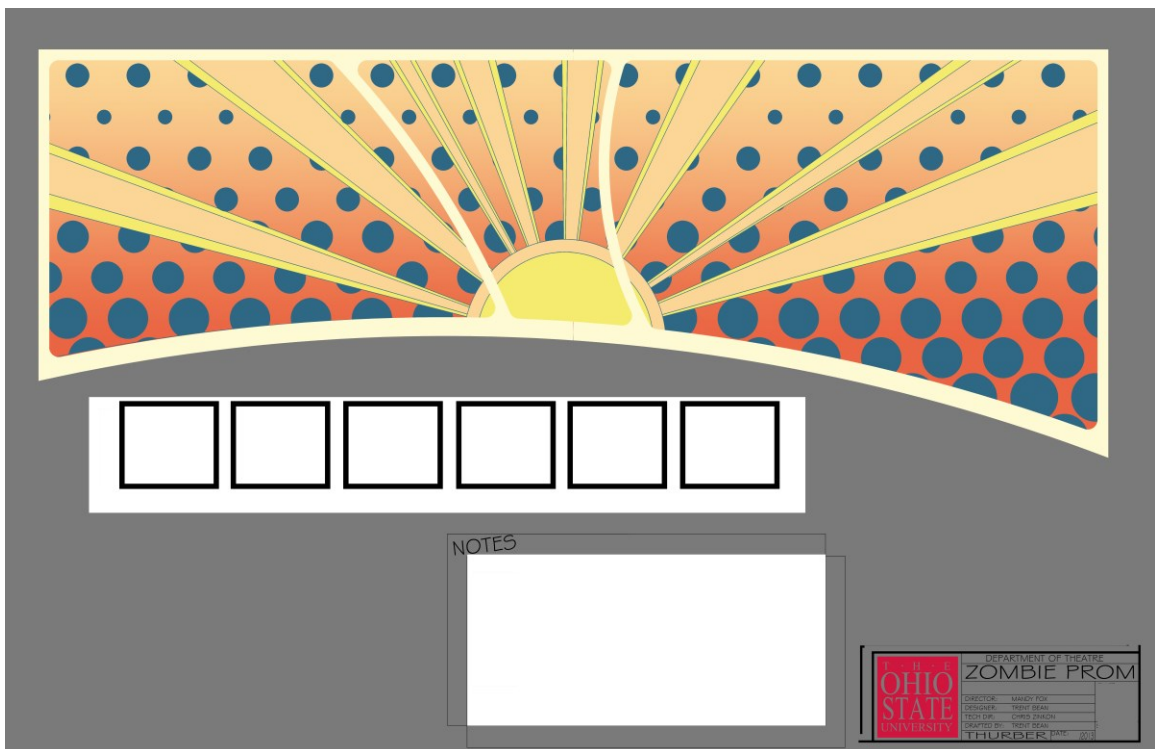


Figure 25. Paint Elevation of the Half-drop.

The total surface of the half-drop was double the size of the boarder. The process of painting it was similar to that of the boarder with the exception of an additional fan bridge placed at the top and no bogus paper. After applying the base coat, I prepared dusty rose, creamy orange, and pale yellow paint in three paint sprayers. As I had

designed, I began to evenly spray the dusty rose across the lower section of the half-drop. Likewise, I evenly distributed the creamy orange pigment across the upper portion, making sure to leave space between the two colors in order to color blend using both sprayers. After several carefully executed sprays, I successfully achieved a color transition from the dusty rose into the creamy orange. As it dried, I applied the pale yellow spray in a dusting fashion and concentrated it more in the uppermost region of the drop, which gave it a fuller tone and color variation (see Figure 25).

After the massive color shift application had dried, I began to lay out the line work for the sun detail and the giant dots. Extrapolating all of the dimensions from the paint elevation, I used the chalk line to snap each radial line. Determining the diameter and center point of each circle, I proceeded to use a string compass with a safety pin at its end in order to mark out the perimeter. After every line was cartooned, my colleague and friend, Shane Cinal, volunteered several hours of his time to help paint the sun and dots on the half-drop. With everything lined and painted as planned, I left the half-drop to dry before folding it up and storing it out of the way.



Figure 26. Finished Nuclear Power Plant Groundrow Stored on the Back Wall of the Thurber Theatre.

On August 21st, classes for the 2013 fall semester began, and with it began the official work in the scenic studio. Chris Zinkon had ordered all of the material to be delivered on the work day of the 21st. After unloading and properly storing all of *Zombie Prom*'s materials, we quickly began to lay out 1/4" sheets of lauan in order to measure and cartoon the silhouette of the groundrow. The groundrow scenic piece was included to raise the horizon line and give depth to the overall look of the set. Given the curvilinear nature of the nuclear power plant groundrow, we plotted dimension points for each curve in order to achieve the most accurate silhouette (see Figure 26). As a group of practicum students plotted each point from the edges of the lauan sheets, I lead the other group connecting each point with a bendable 8'-0" strip of lauan. After everything was drawn, both teams began cutting out the silhouette of the groundrow with jigsaws. By the end of the first day, we had effectively finished the top half of the groundrow and were ready to

frame and assemble it in the following days. By Friday, the 23rd of August, the entire groundrow was put together and erected up center stage of the Thurber.

The following week, we wasted no time in beginning the fabrication of all the show legs. Legs A and B were to track along line set thirteen, while legs C and D were to remain stationary throughout the show. Given the nature



Figure 27. The Layout, Stencil, and Paint Process of the Show Panels.

of these legs, Chris Zinkon decided it best to build a metal frame and stretch muslin across the face, stapling it to wooden strips fastened to the back of the frame. The first

order of business in fabricating these massive 16'-0" by 20'-0" pieces was to lay out the perimeter and center members of each metal frame on the bare floor. After we laid out and measured them, we began cutting the 1" square tubing to their specified lengths and angles. We then fixed them down with wooden cleats and Chris Zinkon welded each seam and intersection. Upon finishing each metal frame, I turned my attentions to the groundrow which was now laying horizontal, ready to be painted. With the help of the student workers who were receiving practicum credit, I filled the cracks with wood plaster and sanded all of the seams of the groundrow and laid the base coat of avocado green paint. I then implemented the same color shift process using the paint sprayer in turquoise and yellow. I laid out and painted in the dark blue lining of the nuclear cooling towers, and added a soft highlight to give dimensionality to the rounded face of each tower. To finish the groundrow, I snapped a line across the face and laid in dark blue dots using the larger scale stencil (see Figure 26). By the end of the week the ground row was finished and a great amount of the legs were completed.



Figure 28. Show Panels A and B Stored in the Scenic Studio. Prepped for Border Layout and Lining.

The week of September 3rd through the 6th, I began applying the base coat and paint treatment to all four show legs while the upstage platforming and ramp were built in the shop. The painting of the legs was done in the same way as the paint on the border piece (see Figure 28). Through referencing the paint elevation, I determined a direction for the dots to lay, and would repeat the same stencil work technique as was outlined with the border. The major difference from the leg pieces to the border piece was the scale of the painting area and the amount of dot work involved. After each panel was finished

with the dot treatment, I outlined and touched up all of the 7” cream white borders that divided each panel. While I was finishing up the show legs, a crew of practicum students was kept busy with the task of building platforms and stairs for the upstage area. I designed the main stretch of walkway on the platform to be 4'-0” in width, which would allow the use of stock platform pieces. The curvilinear nature of the staircase and how it met the ramp was the difficult part during the fabrication of the platforming. Again, we employed the technique of plotting a few select points in order to guide the curve of each stair. After finding each curve, we continued to offset another line 10” to lay out the next step in the run (see Figure 29).

On September 9th, the work on the platforming continued. After adding legs and connecting each platform together, we began to face our work in 1/4” medium density fiberboard (MDF) and cap the decking with 3/4” MDF. While a group of practicum students was engaged in fixing the seams, stapling down the decking, and using the trim router to finish the shape of the curving stairs, another student group began to work on the installation of the front ramp. A section of this massive swooping walkway was built using stock platform as well. While installing legs and fastening the stock platforms at the declining angle that I had designated, we continued facing and capping the ramp that wrapped around the orchestra pit. It seemed that on this week, progress had slowed, yet considering the time consuming nature of custom platforming as well as losing a good amount of manpower to the needs of *The Tempest* set, a workweek spent on platforming was probably appropriate.

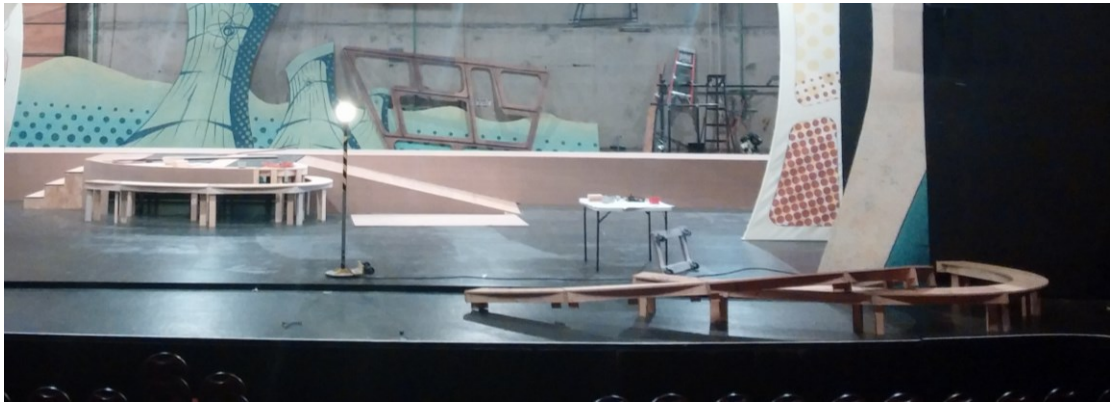


Figure 29. Detail of Construction Method to the Leg Up and Facing of the Upstage Platforming and Stairs.

Because *The Tempest* required more manpower in their build, the following work week consisted of a small group of students to help laying out, cutting, framing, and painting the show portal as well as the high school window piece. Laying out the lauan sheets across the entire floor of Thurber, we used the same technique used to find the path of the curves had previously to find the broad curves of the boomerang portal opening. After making sure every sheet was aligned, we plotted points every 2'-0" which would run along the trajectory of the curve. Following the layout, we removed each piece and cut along the line using a jigsaw. After we realigned all of the pieces in their respective places, we began to lay out the metal framing that would attach to the back of the lauan facing. The challenge that occurred with this framing job was to recede the framing from the outside edge. The reason for this was to avoid having the metal peek out into the portal silhouette which would be visible from the extreme sightlines of the audience. The framing was inset 2'-0" on the exterior edges in order for the false proscenium to fit into

the existing architecture of the proscenium arch while allowing the lauan to run off and terminate behind the stage left and stage right speakers. After the framing was laid out, cut, and welded we fastened the lauan facing onto the metal framing. Technical director, Chris Zinkon expertly planned for this false proscenium piece to be divided into three sections that could be reattached together for ease of installation. This same process was used in fabricating the high school window, yet it took a little longer to layout the angles and rounded corners (see Figure 30).



Figure 30. Paint Process of the Boomerang False Proscenium and Window Piece.

The work week of the 23rd through the 27th of September, was also considerably busy because we had both the chalkboard unit and the television studio sign to build as well as finishing the paint work on the window and the false proscenium. The paint

treatment on the two scenic pieces was done relatively quickly in order to address the considerable amount of work involved in building the chalkboard unit and the television studio sign. We began creating the chalkboard unit by building the rolling pedestal out of metal framing and sheets of plywood set on triple-swivel casters. When the pedestal was finished it was heavy enough to counteract the massive chalkboard wall. We laid out the shape of the wall on top of the lauan and constructed the framing relative to its silhouette. After facing each side of the wall in 1/4" lauan, we attached the foam molding that gave both the chalkboard and the bulletin board their shape. We applied rubberized roofing compound to the foam molding to create a surface that would take paint. When it was all ready, we carefully stood the wall up next to the pedestal and bolted them together while fastening an metal support bar across the top seam where the pedestal met the face of the wall. At first I was quite skeptical about the balance and the maneuverability of the chalkboard unit, but after testing the sturdiness of the wall and pushing it around the Thurber Theatre, I was reminded that Chris Zinkon really does know what he's doing.

The television studio sign was fortunately small enough that we were able to print all of the curved lines included in its design on the department's large-scale plotter. In this way, it took a lot less time to lay out and cut out the entire television studio sign. Once the large pieces were faced with a layer of lauan, I figured out the placement of each piece according to the scenic elevation and fastened them down. Originally, I thought the television studio sign was to be built out of foam instead of plywood, but I quickly realized that building it this way gave a durability to the sign that was reassuring and gave the lighting department a stronger material to fix their instruments to as they

endeavored to add practical lighting to the sign.

The following week, we started to build the two banks of lockers and partitions. The complex nature of these four scenic pieces caused the progress of production to slow. With no regular dimensions or angles, the workers quickly became frustrated. Fortunately, the vertical members of the partitions were small enough for their lines to be printed out on the plotter which sped things up a bit. After the vertical members were cut out and faced in lauan, we did the same for the body of each piece. When we figured out the placement of all of the vertical members in relation to each other and aligned them onto the main piece, we nailed and glued everything together.



Figure 31. Unpainted Stage Left Locker Bank with Jonny's Two Door Passage Way.

Unfortunately, I was not present during the fabrication of the lockers even though they were the most technically complicated pieces in my design. In the stage right locker

bank, I designed a Murphy bed to fold down and transform into Toffee's bedroom. On the stage left locker bank, I designed a passageway allowing Jonny to fit through a two locker section as he returned to life (see Figure 31). In addition to these two significant challenges in the build of the lockers banks, the rest of the lockers also needed to be functional despite their stylized shape. The locker banks were framed in 1” by 4” lumber. After being faced with lauan, we cut the plywood doors and installed them in each of the locker openings.



Figure 32. Process Shot of the Load-in and Installation of the Set.

When October 7th rolled around, we finally began to install and hang the entire show. The tracking was loaded onto line set 13 in order for show legs A and B to move across the entire span of the stage. We hung the proscenium on the inset hanging plate

lovingly referred to as the Dan Gray memorial plate (see Figure 32). The practicum students hung the half-drop and border that I had painted more than a month before. We base painted the platforming, hand rails, facing, ramps, and floor in a white coat that would help keep the bright and light colors applied on top (see Figure 33).

Before this point in the production process, it was hard to get a sense of our progress with the scenery, but after hanging and installing all of the pieces that we had previously built, it felt as if the set had appeared on stage overnight. I hadn't realized how fatigued I had become until I saw the amount of scenery and the results of our work displayed before us. After that, there seemed to be a renewed sense of excitement and energy in building and painting the set to completion.



Figure 33. Process Shot of the Finished Floor and Base Coat of Paint Laid.

October 14th through the 18th was a week filled with the fabrication of smaller set pieces such as the basketball hoop and the mirror ball as well as the painting and sealing of the entire stage floor. Early on, I was informed of the urgency of getting the stage floor painted and sealed before the lighting department commenced their process of hang and focusing lights on stage. Because their light hang started on the 16th, I only had the 14th and the 15th available to finish the floor. After laying out and base coating the color in every section of the floor, I began to layout 3” thick lines that comprised the gymnasium floor. It helped in emphasizing the basketball court by using the light colors of the complementary blue and orange to section off the floor. With the cream orange acting as the base color of the basketball court, the bright turquoise continued into the wings, wrapped around the front of the apron and down the ramp. After laying the color down according to the foot traffic onstage, it was the end of the workday on the 15th. Simply put, I needed to finish the rest of the floor and have it sealed that night in order for the polyurethane to cure before the heavy foot traffic began the next day.



Figure 34. Progressive Shots of the Center Medallion on the Basketball Court Floor Treatment.

The night of the 15th I found that I had my work cut out for me, so I rolled up my sleeves, turned on some music and dug in. I finished lining the gymnasium floor and got to work on the Enrico Fermi High A-bomb logo. After I cartooned it within the center circle of the court, I layered all the colors respectively and outlined the entire logo with a chisel tip marker (see Figure 34). When I was finished, I mixed three spatter colors of off-white, dark green, and medium orange in gallon paint cans. I decided on the off-white to soften the colors, the orange was to catch the warmer colors of the light while the green was to catch the cooler colors and the saturate green light included in the light design. After spattering the entire stage floor and letting it dry for an hour, I rolled on the final coat of polyurethane to seal it. The night of the 15th was a very involved night, but I was pleased to see how much work I was able to get done, making the floor ready for the light hang the next day.

The week of the 21st through the 25th could be considered a contingency week, available in case we needed to catch up on paint notes or construction details, which we definitely did. Work hours were filled with a variety of paint notes ranging from base coating and painting the lockers inside and out to finishing the halftone dots that were placed across the face of the set. Because the lockers were solid colors alternating from dusty rose to mustard to light yellow, most of our time was used in applying paint evenly across the surface to ensure there were no blemishes in the paint. Because the lockers were on stage through the entire show constantly hit by lights, I wanted to make sure that each color was solid. We continued painting the insides of each locker with flat black with the exception of the locker that Jonny jumped out of. This double locker opening for Jonny was treated in a dark blue with black light reactive halftone dots radiating on the back of the door. This was done as a detail that would catch the black light that was focused at Jonny as he appeared onstage and was enjoyable only to those who were looking for it. The reason for the time spent on the halftone dots placed on the facing of the set was because of the nature of the stencil work being placed on a vertical surface. I had to tape the large stencil in place and trace each dot individually. After removing the stencil, I proceeded to paint each individual dot with a small scenic brush. Unfortunately, one coat of paint on each dot did not suffice and required a second layer to achieve a satisfying coat.

On the evening of the 25th of October we had crew watch, a rehearsal run-through of the show for members of the crew to watch before they needed to remain backstage to do their individual jobs. Only three scenic run crew were assigned to *Zombie*

Prom because Mandy Fox and I desired for the scenery to be manipulated by the performers. This method introduced challenges such as the need for every piece of scenery to work efficiently and have a proper weight and height conducive to ability of the actors. Because we employed this type of actor involvement with the scenery, Laura Murphy, Catherine Quamme, and Rachel Skowron were assigned to work the scenery pieces that I had designed to fly in and out. Scenic pieces such as the main curtain, the half-drop, the high school window, the basketball hoop, the television studio sign, and the Mylar curtain. They also held other responsibilities including offstage preparation and maintenance of the scenery. Before these three ladies were able to watch the run through of *Zombie Prom*, I gave them a full tour of the scenery and the space to explain to them what was expected of them and how to do their job.



Figure 35. Early in the Process of Painting the Design Continuation from the False Proscenium to the Existing Architecture.

The weekend after crew watch I made the goal to finish the portal design that continued from the fabricated false proscenium onto the existing cement wall. Using the tried and true method I developed for the drops, I proceeded to add the dot technique onto the wall framing the portal. This process took a considerable amount of time because of the nature of the paint treatment being applied onto a vertical surface. To make matters worse, access to these areas was limited and I had to employ the use of the genie lift through the entire process (see Figure 35). Fortunately, after the weekend, I finished the halftone dot radial design that framed the portal opening. With this project out of the way, it freed up the space for the lockers to be permanently installed on either side of the stage. Though these areas were not entirely lit, I wanted to make sure that this portion of the design was fully realized because the publicity poster of *Zombie Prom* showcased my

paint elevation of the false proscenium (see Figure 36).



Figure 36. OSU's Poster Image Created by Damian Bowerman using My Proscenium Paint Elevation as the Frame.

Tech week for *Zombie Prom* ran October 29th through November 6th. During this time in mounting the show, the scenic studio finished all of the major elements of scenery, which left only smaller notes and details to be look after. These notes quickly multiplied into pages and lists that took hours to go through. Tech week is a crucial time for any production and *Zombie Prom* was no exception. Each night, the call time for the designers was 6:00 p.m. before the tech rehearsal would begin. While there, we would discuss new items of business or progress that was made during work hours and make preparations for the evening's run-through. As the show started, I equipped myself with a pen and notepad to write down issues and challenges that occurred. By the end of each run-through I commonly had four separate lists of notes. One list was made for carpentry

and shop work that required hands-on detail work for the physical scenery, while another list compiled notes regarding paint issues and touchups. Both of these lists were typically shared with Chris Zinkon to ensure that the proper amount of manpower was made available for each task. I shared a list of prop notes with Shane Cinal, the graduate student in charge of the props for the OSU season. The last list I would commonly make each night was a short bullet-pointed list of issues and challenges needing to be brought to the attention of the production team at tech table each night. Unfortunately, because of the rigorous work schedule and long hours that were involved in the tech week process I was unable to thoroughly document the progress made with photography. Most of what I have from those long nights and busy work days is in the numerous lists of items unceremoniously scribbled out. It would appear that this process lacks some refined qualities, but this period of time in a production can be deceptive. As hellacious as tech week can become, it is all for the refinement of the show. Tech week for *Zombie Prom* had a quality collaborative work environment which was important in achieving a fantastic show and became the capstone of the entire production process.

Chapter 5: Evaluation

The production team for *Zombie Prom* faced some interesting and unique challenges throughout the design and production process. The designers suggested and enthusiastically embraced ideas in regard to the director's vision in one meeting only to be considered obsolete and left behind in search of more exciting and appropriate ideas that better served the story of the show. When Mandy Fox created the design approach for the show she referenced Susan Sontag's essay "Notes on camp" from her book, *Against Interpretation* (1961). In Sontag's essay, she lists fifty eight tenants of the camp genre. To make things less complicated, Fox selected three from the fifty eight tenants that were most relevant to the show as the guiding standard of our designs as we went forward. These tenants were the love of artifice, the sentimentality toward the past, and the serious intentions of "pure" camp. Sentimentality were emphasized by involving genuine motifs common to the 1950s and committing to a certain stylization. The artifice was embraced, for example, by simply suggesting that a two dimensional board was a functioning basketball hoop and the design invited the audience to accept that notion. The responsibilities of keeping the intentions for pure camp were left in the capable hands of the actors and the musicians. Acknowledging that *Zombie Prom* had topped Fox's list of desired productions for the past eight years disclosed a subtle yet distinct amount of pressure to get this right. Though the pressure was ever present it was ultimately balanced

by Fox's patient and enthusiastic personality as well as the silly simple nature prominently included in the script.

The night before its opening, I attended the preview of *Zombie Prom*. Seeing that all of the notes acquired through tech rehearsal were addressed and resolved, I felt I was able to remove myself from the role of a production team member and enjoy the show as a true audience member. Instantly, I was struck by the all-inclusive nature of the designs during preshow. Using the power of suggestion, the designs encouraged the audience to feel as though this production was put on by the drama club at Enrico Fermi high school. The theatricality of the show was upheld by the energetic connection between the audience and the performers, the use of the main stage curtain, the ever present mirror ball hanging over the audience, and the repeated breaking of the fourth wall.

On opening night, I immersed myself in the conversations and discussions of the audience in reaction to the set. I was first concerned with what subconscious effect my design would have on them. I quickly realized that I had not considered the full effect the visual elements had on the audience. It was apparent that they were moved by the detail and scale of the world presented to them on stage. The quantitative size of the set was equal to the size of the Thurber Theater space, and the quality of the design told of thoughtful consideration of all of the many facets and requirements included in the show.

While watching as an audience member, I realized that the theory of the design and movement that I envisioned did not translate entirely into the realization of the show. I saw in my mind's eye large set pieces moving in and out of arrangement in virtual silence and pinpoint accuracy as if they were dancing to the bop of the musical score. Yet

for the performance, not only was there considerable amount of planning but also repeated practice in coordination for the transitions to be optimal.

I felt my collaboration with the choreographer, Aaron Michael Lopez was quite effective but was not without its own problems. Lopez did a marvelous job in utilizing every scenic element and level that I had design into the show. But when it came to things such as the shortened dimension of the stair treads, the height of the handrails and the fact that every set piece on casters needed to be stood upon, we had to come together and compromise to arrive at the best solution for both scenery and the choreography.

My collaboration with the sound design team of Jim Knapp, Marta Lukacevic, and Zach Ivans was also quite healthy yet still retained some interesting challenges. When I decided to continue my design onto the proscenium of the theater, I infringed on the sound department, specifically in regards to the inclusion of the large speakers on either side of the stage into my design. I chose to paint a soft covering that would wrap around the face plate of each speaker that would change the contemporary black look into the desired look of 1950s hallway monitor speakers. Really, the issue wasn't with these speakers on the sides of the stage but was in the sound department effort's to locate the amplified voices of the performers more centrally. In order to centralize the sound they were requesting the ability to include a set of speakers in a central location in the scenery. After discussing the pros and cons of tiling down these speakers from the front of house truss which would obstruct the clean outline of the proscenium opening, we decided to post them up on the face of the downstage ramp. Even though this wasn't the most ideal solution with regard to the scenery, we arrived at a solution that was satisfactory to the

sound department.

The relationship between lighting and scenery I felt to be strong and transparent. Although we were in constant communication concerning every design element in the show there were still some regrettable issues. For example, I found the golden orange hue of the curtain to be both appropriate and flattering to the set and the odd nature of the show. Lighting designer Chelsie McPhilimy felt the curtain to be too dull and elected to blast it with a highly saturate red light. This treatment of light effectively turned the curtain from an odd golden orange to a deep red, and resulted in painting the rest of the colorful and zany decorative elements of the false proscenium in unflattering shades of red. Though this decision created an association to red caution lights found in nuclear fallout shelters and had turned the main stage curtains into a more appealing color, it was done at the expense of a flattering preshow.

Another weak point was the inclusion of off-white borders and areas in the scenic design. This became a prominent issue between lighting and scenery when the intense light from the spotlights would hit the surface of the off-white area causing it to be too bright. In the end I was able to address much of this problem by painting the 7" off-white band that ran along the facing of the entire stage floor with a solid turquoise and added half-tone dots of color on the platform facing upstage.

There were only a handful of issues that developed between scenery and costumes. The makeup color of the performers on stage had to be taken into consideration in regards to the inclusion of off-white paint in the set. Another issue is that the light colors of the stair facing were constantly scuffed up by black rubber-soled shoes of the

performers. There was nothing to be done about this issue except to constantly clean the scuff marks from the shoes. There was a small incident in which the chrome paint that was applied to the rolling chair in the Exposé news headquarters scene flaked off on to Eddie's suit. I resolved this problem by finding a new rolling chair. The part of the show that required the most amount of collaboration between scenery and costumes was the mass costume change onstage behind the locker room partitions. Because of the tracked partitions and the limited amount of time for this costume change to happen, I spoke with costume designer Emily Jeu in depth about everything that needed to be taken into consideration. This includes the amount of foot space on each pallet, the size of the benches available behind each partition, the inclusion of clothing hooks and the required height of each partition according to the height of performers changing onstage.

Even with these issues among all of the respective designs, the biggest regret I have in relation to *Zombie Prom*'s scenery is the integration of the design into the existing architecture of Thurber Theatre. I am well aware that it would be a massive undertaking to address the sharp break from the wood paneling and rectilinear lines of the Thurber architecture into the curvilinear colorful scenery. What bothered me the most were the sections of the existing proscenium that were not covered by the boomerang shape of the false proscenium and the stock black velour masking that hung next to the show legs and borders. If I were able to go back and address a group of issues, I would include a reveal on the false proscenium to completely cover the existing proscenium arch. I would also build and paint another set of show legs and border that would fit seamlessly in to the established look. Of course, I realize that these solutions would depend on budgetary

limitations as well as the availability of manpower and time. Yet as I sat in the audience, drinking in the details of the finished show, it was quite difficult not to fixate on the hard line silhouettes of masking and the black void that tended to clash with the mood and theme of the world of the play.

In reflecting on the quality of the show, it is undeniable that both the performance and the design of *Zombie Prom* was skillfully executed and harbored great deal of sincerity and joy. Laced through the lighthearted silliness of the show is its contagious energy that can only be perpetuated by a design that jumped in with both feet. *Zombie Prom* may not be one of the most prestigious shows or considered a thesis project to be sought after, but it did pose its own unique challenges and had plenty of content for me to sink my teeth into. With the charge that Mandy Fox gave me in designing the scenery, I feel as though the end product upheld the love of artifice and perpetuated the sentimentality towards the past. I cobbled together an atomic cocktail of Cold War era propaganda, the golden age of comic books and graphic novels, the zany motifs and retro-futurism of the 1950s and the unforgettable experience of being a senior in high school. I find it astonishing how balanced, dynamic, and high quality my thesis design turned out to be. The moment I fully realized the magic of my design was when I sat in the audience hearing words of admiration, seeing nodding heads of approval, and feeling the rush of electricity through the audience as the set surprised them with its clever simplicity.

Through the string of performances of *Zombie Prom*, I consistently received praise and encouragement from colleagues, students, and faculty alike. Truth be told, the

caliber of *Zombie Prom* was different to shows more common to OSU's season selection. With the desire to push boundaries and facilitate an environment of learning, The Ohio State University's Department of Theatre has pursued challenging shows over shows whose potential is not readily apparent. Comedies are not a common genre considered when looking at requirements for show submissions. It is my opinion that a season's selection needs a palate cleanser every once in a while. In announcing *Zombie Prom* at the departmental meeting at the beginning of the school year, Dan Gray simply stated, "We are going to have fun, dammit." Indeed we did. As Mandy Fox had fun so did the production team. As stage manager Jen Monfort had fun so did the cast and crew of the show. And when the audience came to each performance and saw how much fun *Zombie Prom* could be, they joined in. Simply put, if you're not having fun doing *Zombie Prom* then you are not doing it right.

The reception of the show by the department, the community, and the critics was extremely positive. There was consistently a large audience attendance every night and though there was various levels of reaction and engagement, there always was a healthy vibe in the house. Michael Grossberg, a theater critic from the Columbus Dispatch was very generous and kind in his critique of our show. In regard to my scenic design and the designs of my colleagues he wrote, "The most impressive aspect of OSU's top-notch production is its design, from Trenton Bean's angular, Atomic-Age scenery to Emily Jeu's 1950s pastel costumes and Chelsie McPhilimy's candied lighting." (Grossberg, 2013)

Overall, the scenic design achieved what I intended. It encouraged the love of

artifice and perpetuated a fond nostalgia of the past and most of all it helped tell the story and transport the audience to a zany world. The whimsical and energetic nature of the scenes were enjoyable. The horizontal movement of the show panels in connection with the Ben-Day and halftone dot treatment was reminiscent of the golden age of comic books and 1950s graphic novels. Although the overall design of scenery was unique and loaded with jet stream curves and a bright 1950s color palette, the upbeat and catchy music played by the orchestra and the sincere camp performance of the actors gave the show an endearing charm.

I spared no effort and made sure to give my all for *Zombie Prom*. I am proud of what I have accomplished and I have been well rewarded with a design and production experience that I will remember fondly.

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Appendix A: The Director's Concept

Director's Concept by Mandy Fox

ZOMBIE PROM

Music by Dana P. Rowe

Book & Lyrics by John Dempsey

"One must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing."
Oscar Wilde

Where & When

The script specifies that, "*Zombie Prom* takes place in the nuclear fifties. It is set in the hallways and classrooms of the Enrico Fermi High School, the newsroom of *Expose' Magazine*, a television studio, and Toffee's bedroom."

Plot

www.zombiepromthemovie.com summarizes the plot like this:

Set in the fabulous '50s, this is the tale of a sweet teenage girl named, Toffee (a Gidget-type) and her "rebel without a cause" boyfriend, Jonny [with no 'h']. The two meet at Enrico Fermi High School and fall in love, but the principal, Miss Delilah Strict (Stalin in pumps and a dress!) intervenes, persuading the indecisive young Toffee to break up with Jonny. Tortured by the betrayal, Jonny drives his motorcycle to the nearby Francis Gary Powers Nuclear Power Plant and flings himself into a nuclear cooling tower!

Guilt ridden and alone, Toffee mourns the loss of her love, until one day when Jonny returns, risen from the dead - AS A TEENAGE NUCLEAR ZOMBIE! The mass of decomposing flesh professes his love and tells Toffee that he wants her back. He plans to clean up his act, finish school and take her to the senior prom - if she'll have him. Toffee is racked with indecision, but worst of all Miss Strict refuses to allow "zombie scum" in her fine institution. She clearly states that "The satanic walking dead are strictly prohibited at Enrico Fermi High." She even threatens to cancel the senior prom if anyone is caught supporting the "cadaver's cause."

At the same time, word of this conflict reaches EDDIE FLAGRANTE, a slick sensationalist TV show host, who loves a lost cause. Eddie arrives at the school with his film crew to cover the story and make a "cause celebre" out of Jonny - "This sounds like a clear-cut case of Zombie Civil Rights!" But once he arrives, we see that he and Miss Strict share a past, shrouded in an elusive mystery.

In the end, we discover that Ms. Strict and Eddie Flagrante were high school sweethearts and had a child out of wedlock that was immediately put up for adoption. Eddie, being the ace reporter that he is, does "a little digging" and discovers that Jonny is their long-lost son and the three reunite as "one big nuclear family."

Production Style

Zombie Prom is clearly an homage to the Camp Genre. The quintessential treatise on the genre, Susan Sontag's essay "Notes on Camp" from her book, *Against Interpretation* (1961), describes the genre in the fifty-eight tenants.

Perhaps the most relevant are the love of artifice, sentimentality toward the past, and the serious intentions of "pure" Camp. The first two points are easily identified in the dialogue and situational requirements of the story, but the last is seated in the harmonics of the score and the sincerity of the playing.

I would like to embrace the artifice and sentimentality through the design elements and allow the seriousness to be carried by the acting and the soaring, pop melodies of Dana Rowe.

For example, when Jonny returns from the dead as a nuclear-teenage-zombie, he is not the moaning, stumbling, vacant flesh-eating monster that is represented in modern zombie movies. He is a young leading male (like Peter Parker from *Spiderman*) who, against all odds, sings sweet songs to win back his true love and pleads his case to finish high school. He also happens to be green. So...the design and situation reflects the Camp and the acting and crooning is sincere.

I will be happy to provide Sontag's essay for anyone who would like a copy.

The following information about specific design elements are merely seeds of thoughts. I remain completely open and ready brainstorm ideas with each member of the design or production team. I look forward to your ideas!

Casting

The play requires 10-16 actors and I aim to provide as many performance opportunities as possible. I am open to cross-dressed casting as androgyny and sexual identity play are a hallmark of the genre (Rue Paul played Delilah Strict in the movie version).

Sound

I request that Theo Jackson be the musical director for the production and be in charge of assembling a band. I'm open to suggestions about where the band will be located. I plan on working with him to update the orchestrations a bit. The cast recording sounds like a hybrid of the 1950s and the late 1980s. I would like to lean toward a hybrid of the 1950s and today's popular music sound. I believe this can be done through instrumentation, tempo, and vocal style.

I would like to use body microphones. We will need an echo effect (recorded or live) at key moments when Toffee hears Jonny's voice from beyond the grave. We will need an old-looking 1950's microphone(s) for the television studio and some sort of effect - whether achieved through the body microphones or another way. We will need a few sound effects (ex. nuclear plant explosion, class bells, loud speaker announcements, etc.) I would like to discuss the possibility of Ms. Strict occasionally using a bullhorn.

Scenic

I look forward to talking about the possibility of flying several things: perhaps the mylar curtain (prom?), perhaps a few desks/tables.

I'm dreaming of a dance with rolling chairs during "That's the Beat for Me" so this would be a consideration regarding the floor surface of Eddie's office at Expose' Magazine.

We will need a way to simulate/symbolize/represent Eddie jumping into the nuclear waste silo.

Maybe some nuclear fallout instead of confetti at the happy ending? Just a thought...

Lighting

Lots of color - especially during the songs. Disco ball at prom and a few other key moments? Perhaps the mylar curtain for prom. Moments of isolation, especially Toffee when she hears Jonny's voice from beyond the grave.

Effect when Eddie jumps into the nuclear waste silo.

Coordination with costume/makeup designer(s) on Eddie's green appearance.

Costumes & Makeup

The costumes should be over-the-top with a emphasis on the 1950's and stereotype. I'm imagining bright varying colors, crinolines, skinny ties, and bobby socks. I am open to a modern take on the typical 1950s garb. There may be different cliques of students who dress similarly.

Johnny needs a letter jacket with no 'h' in the spelling of his name (referred to as his "no 'h' jacket"). When Jonny returns from the dead, his skin should be green. The costume and lighting designer will need to experiment to find the best solution for this effect.

I'm hoping the secretaries in Eddie's office ("That's the Beat for Me") can be typical 1940's beautiful, but useless stenographer types. This is where I am envisioning the dance with the rolling chairs.

All will need something special to wear to the prom (including Delilah and Eddie).

Also, I have some thoughts about going fast through time during the final number (graduation to their wedding day). I look forward to chatting about the possibility.

Props

Signs for holidays to show the passage of time during the prologue. More to come

Appendix B: Final Scenic Bid

ZOMBIE PROM - FINAL SCENERY BID

UNIT	PURPOSE	MATERIAL	QTY	PRICE	SUBTOTAL	UNIT TOTAL
APRON RAMP # PLATFORMING	LIDS	3/4" OSB	12	\$22.00	\$264.00	
	FRAME	2X4X12	36	\$5.00	\$180.00	
	LEGS	2X4X12	20	\$5.00	\$100.00	
	SHOWFLOOR	1/2" MDF	12	\$24.00	\$288.00	
	FACING	1/4" MDF	6	\$16.00	\$96.00	
					\$0.00	
						\$928.00
LOCKERS SL # SR	COVER	1/4" LAUAN	10	\$12.00	\$120.00	
	FRAME	1X4X12	30	\$5.00	\$150.00	
	DOORS	1/2" PLY	4	\$30.00	\$120.00	
	HARDWARE	MISC HDWR	12	\$10.00	\$120.00	
	BED	MISC MATERIALS	1	\$50.00	\$50.00	
					\$0.00	
						\$560.00
STARBURSTS	FOAM BALLS	2" FOAM	2	\$30.00	\$60.00	
	FOAM BALLS	1/4" LAUAN	2	\$12.00	\$24.00	
	FRAME	1/2" ALUM SQ TUBE	4	\$20.00	\$80.00	
	CLOCK	MISC MATERIALS	1		\$0.00	
					\$0.00	
						\$164.00
SPEAKER COVERS	COVERS	1/4" LAUAN	1	\$12.00	\$12.00	
	FRAME	1X4X12	3	\$5.00	\$15.00	
					\$0.00	
						\$27.00
SHOW PORTAL	COVER	1/4" LAUAN	10	\$12.00	\$120.00	
	FRAME	1" SQ BOX TUBE	10	\$14.00	\$140.00	
	FRAME	1" X 2" RECT BOX	4	\$22.00	\$88.00	
					\$0.00	
						\$348.00
UPSTAGE PLATFORMING	PLATFORMS	4X8 PLATFORMS	8	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
	PLATFORMS	4X5 PLATFORM	3	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
	PLATFORMS	4X6 PLATFORM	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
	LIDS	3/4" OSB	8	\$22.00	\$176.00	
	FRAMING	2X4X12	24	\$5.00	\$120.00	
	LEGS	2X4X12	15	\$5.00	\$75.00	
	SHOWFLOOR	1/2" MDF	16	\$24.00	\$384.00	
	FACING	1/4" MDF	12	\$16.00	\$192.00	
	ESCAPE STAIRS	OFFSTAGE ESCAPES	2	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
	HANDRAIL	2" ROUND TUBE	8	\$24.00	\$192.00	
	HANDRAIL	BASE FITTINGS	14	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
					\$0.00	
						\$1,139.00
CHALK BOARD CART	LIDS	3/4" OSB	4	\$22.00	\$88.00	
	CASTERS	TRIPLE SWIVEL	6	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
	FRAMING	2X4X12	6	\$4.00	\$24.00	
	FACING	1/4" MDF	1	\$16.00	\$16.00	
	SHOWFLOOR	1/2" MDF	3	\$24.00	\$72.00	
	WALL FRAME	1" SQ BOX TUBE	6	\$14.00	\$84.00	
	COVER	1/4" LAUAN	6	\$12.00	\$72.00	
	COVER	1" FOAM	4	\$15.00	\$60.00	
	BULLETIN BOARD	CORK	2	\$15.00	\$30.00	
						\$0.00
						\$446.00
GROUNDROW	COVER	1/4" LAUAN	8	\$12.00	\$96.00	
	FRAME	1X4X12	24	\$5.00	\$120.00	
	FLATS	4X8 HOLLYWOOD	5	\$0.00	\$0.00	(STOCK)
					\$0.00	
						\$216.00
TRACKING LEGS A # B	COVER	14'5" NAT MUSLIN	7	\$24.80	\$173.60	
	COVER	16'5" NAT MUSLIN	7	\$31.25	\$218.75	
	FRAME	1" SQ BOX TUBE	10	\$14.00	\$140.00	
	TRACK	UNISTRUT	3	\$39.60	\$118.80	

Appendix C: Review from the Columbus Dispatch

Theater review | ‘Zombie Prom’: Musical has its moments, good and bad

‘ZOMBIE PROM’

Ohio State University’s theater department will present *Zombie Prom* at 7:30 tonight and Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 14-16 and 3 p.m. Nov. 17 at Drake Performance Center’s Thurber Theatre, 1849 Cannon Dr. Tickets cost \$25, \$20 for OSU faculty, staff, Alumni Association members and senior citizens; \$15 for students and children. Call 614-292-2295 or visit theatre.osu.edu.



Matt Hazard From left, Liz Light plays Miss Delilah Strict, Trent Rowland is Jonny, and Kelly Hogan is Toffee in Ohio State University Theatre’s production of *Zombie Prom*.

By Michael Grossberg [The Columbus Dispatch](#) • Friday November 8, 2013 12:15 AM

Halloween’s over, but its spirit is alive — and, well, a little dead — in Ohio State University Theatre’s *Zombie Prom*.

The cliches and conventions of high-school comedy and cheap horror films collide and mutate with mixed results in the peppy musical, which opened last night in Drake Performance Center's Thurber Theatre.

Former central Ohioans John Dempsey and Dana P. Rowe conceived this silly genre mash-up, based on a campy but sweet story by Dempsey and Hugh M. Murphy about a boy who comes back from the dead after a nuclear-plant mishap to rejoin his senior class, graduate and take his girlfriend to their high-school prom.

Despite a sketchy attempt to draw parallels between nuclear power and the nuclear family, this satirical little musical doesn't have that much to say and doesn't resonate outside whatever retro pop-cultural reference still might connect to aging boomers.

Some of Dempsey's lyrics are clever. (Not all, though I concede that "bomb" rhymes with "prom.")

Overall, this 1993 musical, which ran off-Broadway in 1996, probably isn't revived that often because the plot twists are predictable and the generic score lacks tunes to remember.

Director Mandy Fox nonetheless finds deft ways to make the two-act, two-hour show sizzle with a nostalgic sheen that here and there evokes more entertaining memories of *Grease* and *The Rocky Horror Show*.

The most impressive aspect of OSU's top-notch production is its design, from Trenton Bean's angular, Atomic-Age scenery to Emily Jeu's 1950s pastel costumes and Chelsie McPhilimy's candied lighting.

Fox is especially good at helping the strong student ensemble paint their cartoonish characters in amusing colors while mining the meager material for whatever nuggets of retro style and satirical humor still have enough of a half-life to radiate vitality.

Kelly Hogan (as popular high-school senior Toffee) and Trent Rowland (as Jonny, her back-from-the-dead boyfriend) sing and move with assurance. They also generate enough romantic-comedy chemistry to make a few moments vivid. (So what if the chemistry, as scripted, isn't dramatically radioactive? This isn't *Romeo and Juliet*.)

Liz Light has fun camping it up as Miss Delilah Strict, the tough principal with a femme fatale secret in her past. Strictly speaking, though, her romantic subplot with Ryan Boda's game Eddie Flagrante and a hidden relative ranks among the weaker elements. (That's far below "you're-a-star" uranium, though much higher than boring boron.)

Among Rowe's best melodies: *Blast from the Past*, buoyantly belted out by Rowland; and *The Voice in the Ocean*, a soaring duet between Jonny and Toffee. (Along with *Good as It Gets*, led by Hogan, that's about as good as it gets.)

The five-member pit orchestra is lively, though the orchestrations and muddy sound design occasionally drown out some bits of dialogue or lyrics.

Genre mash-ups are popular these days, not to mention zombies. So although more than a week has passed since a certain ghoulish holiday, OSU deserves credit for relatively good timing.

mgrossberg@dispatch.com

Appendix D: Historical Reviews of *Zombie Prom*

ECTOR,
st did —
us letter

... indicate that he's "No. 1."
With such an outlook on life,
it's no wonder that, at 81, Dad is
healthy, active, sharp as a tack
and well loved.
FRANK'S KID

Will son retake vaccination?

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Dr. Peter Gott
Medical Advice

having trouble with my legs for 47 years and have suffered with charley-horses, pain and muscle spasms. I finally went to a doctor who gave me a prescription for Calan-SR to see if it would help. For the first time in my life, my legs are normal. What is wrong that the pills have taken care of? Is there any harm in taking this medicine for the rest of my life?

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DEAR READER: Calan SR, a calcium channel blocker, aids

'Zombie Prom' beats the Super Bowl

By **PAULIE RAYMOND**
Sun Life Editor

Theater Review

While 40 percent of the country watched the Super Bowl, some of that other 60 percent saw something a bit more mind-bending.

I was among the small band of "cultural elite" watching the world premiere of "Zombie Prom" at the Red Barn Theatre, Sunday night. Gary McDonald created a visually dynamic set for the supercharged score, created by Dana Rowe and John Dempsey.

The label "toxic rock opera" became clear in the lyrics of the first song, "Jonny Don't Go to the Nuclear Plant." The teen-aged Jonny Warner (John Good) has committed suicide at the nuclear plant.

Jonny's tragic demise doesn't

go for naught; it provides a rocking, ironic basis for the rest of the opera, from his girlfriend Toffee (instead of the ubiquitous Brandy), played by Dorian Beach, to the gang at good old Enrico Fermi High School.

Three of the gang are genuine teenagers and good friends: Sonya Manning, Amber McDonald and Zoe Wells. Joy Hawkins directed her daughter (Zoe) in this one. The two guys in the gang, though not quite teenagers, were played by Dennis DePaul and Chris Schuller.

Marjorie Paul-Shook shakes things up as Delilah Stern, Enrico Fermi's no-nonsense principal. As she sings "blessed are

we who educate," one has flashbacks to Paul Shook as Mother Superior in "Nunsense."

Jonny makes a dazzling, special effects entrance, as one of the living dead. This has to be John Good's least glamorous part so far. His zombie makeup is eerie, and his jacket looks as if he were sleeping on the bottom of the ocean.

As the toxic rock counterpart of Geraldo, ("whiter than Oprah and hipper than Phil") Art Nicholas played a fine, sleazy Ricardo. His entrance on roller blades was appropriate for a guy who loves late-night skating at the Overseas Market.

He and Paul-Shook were hilarious in "Just Business" and particularly, "Expose" with its revelations about Boise and Cleveland. Nicholas' flicking

tongue, the pair's tortuous tan going, the leather and the feather tambourine broke up the audience.

Meanwhile, Jonny is lobbying to be the first zombie to be admitted back to school ("zombies should get minority status").

He does get admitted back to school -- even after Miss Stern declared, "If this freak wants his diploma, that's what public schools are for!"

With shimmering decorations and the old-fashioned mirrored ball, the set is transformed into prom night. Dead Jonny, dressed in his tuxedo, dances with Toffee, just like old times. "Teen Angel?"

"Zombie Prom" plays at the Red Barn Theatre, Wednesdays-Sundays, through Feb. 28. Curtain time is 8 p.m.

Renaissance Fest's north of Keys

The Florida Renaissance Festival returns to Snyder Park in

peasants and nobility. Of course, a step back to time

ted free. Look for discount coupons at local Circle K and Thrift

Cobb SOON: "Ground Hog Day"

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

'Zombie Prom' a fun musical flashback

The classic burger joint movie *American Graffiti* had the most important question of a generation when it asked "Where were you in '62?" But not all of us had the same answer, and not all of the music moved to the beat of da-doo-roo-roo.

There was also the torch rock ballad, which celebrated its heyday in dorm rooms and at basement parties, away from the hot rods and neon lights. Mostly ignored by history, songs like *Teen Angel* and other anthems chronicled the heartbreak over lovers lost to car wrecks and run-ins with railroad engines.

In the theater, a few revues like *Beehive* and *Forever Plaid* touched on that millisecond in rock music history. The smash off-Broadway musical *Little Shop of Horrors* flirted much more openly with the torch ballad, but mostly in Detroit's early Motown mode.

Now comes *Zombie Prom*, a flamboyant new musical satire that celebrates torch rock in all its glorious excess. Conceived by a group of Fort

JACK ZINK
Theater Writer



Lauderdale-based creative types, the one-hour blast from the past had a try-out last spring at Key West's counter-culture Red Barn Theatre. *Zombie Prom* is now getting a showcase by The New River Repertory Company at The Studio in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

The music by Dana P. Rowe and lyrics by John Dempsey are full-bore teen anthems from start to finish, sung by a group of full-voiced singers who slalom down (and up) every melodic curve. The story, by Dempsey and di-

THEATER REVIEW

Zombie Prom

New musical comedy with '60s era music, about teen-age lovers whose relationship survives the grave.

Fridays through Sundays through Sept. 5 at The Studio, 640 N. Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale. Tickets \$10-\$12. Call 1-305-523-0507.

rector Hugh M. Murphy, is a sublime caricature as good as *Little Shop of Horrors*, with the same ghoulish mind set. Originally scheduled for a quick two-weekend run, it has been extended through Sept. 5 and could go longer.

The story opens with a cute high school girl singing *Johnny, Don't Go to the Nuclear Plant*, which is the whole story's book. Borrowing a post-'60s environmental theme, rebel boyfriend Johnny jumped into the reactor and was baked.

His body was dumped in the ocean but is brought back to life through some atomic mystery. He wants to take his girl to the prom — but because he's dead and no longer a registered student, principal Delilah Strick won't let him.

Stacey Turner is the girl and Rand James is her zombie. They're a great vocal duo for Rowe's heart-pumping musical anthems, which are underscored by virtually every musical riff that found its way into a '60s recording studio.

The show doesn't fully belong to the leading couple. Top honors are shared with Leslie McMillan-Perez in who ranks as the best man-in-drag performance of many a year. McMillan-Perez is the school principal, with a deep rolling voice for his share of torch ballads.

An interesting subplot involves tabloid TV show host named Ricardo, a cousin to both Melvin P. Thorpe of *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and real-life Geraldo Rivera. Kudos to Tom Prince for an enthusiastic turn.

PROM; Entertainment Update; Theater

New York Law Journal
April 12, 1996 Friday

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New York Law Journal

Section: Pg. 31, (col. 4); Vol. 215

Length: 674 words

Byline: Martin Gottfried

Body

Entertainment Update

Theater

Zombie Prom

BY: John Dempsey

DIRECTOR: Philip Wm. McKinley

CAST: Richard Muenz, Karen Murphy, Richard Roland, Jessica-Snow Wilson

WHERE: Variety Arts Theatre, 13th Street and Third Avenue.

Telephone: (212) 239-6200.

To pre-judge from its title, *Zombie Prom* might have been emulating *The Rocky Horror Show*, the campy, long-running cult musical. Then, as the lights go up on its opening number, the musical appears to be going after something simpler, a spoof of the 1950s in a high school/rock-and-roll setting, much like *Grease*.

But in fact, this sharp and spiffy show is brighter and better crafted than both *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Grease* put together. And it introduces the kind of unspoiled but professional new talent that our somnolent, revival-choked musical stage so desperately needs.

As written by John Dempsey, with consistent logic and tone, *Zombie Prom* happens dead center in Eisenhower America - the '50s of J. Edgar Hoover morality, **Confidential** magazine sleaze and bouffant hairdos. The setting is Enrico Fermi High School, named for the father of the atom bomb. The characters are out of Archie and Veronica comics: eight students plus the principal, Delilah Strict, and the editor of a scandal magazine, Eddie Flagrante. These names are not meant to be funny, but rather, to be funny, mocking what used to be funny in the 1950s, a world that the show's witty designers - sets by James Youmans, costumes by Gregg Barnes - so cunningly replicate.

Our heroine, Toffee (all the girls have toy names) has a crush on Jonny, who is so rebellious he has taken the H out of his Biblical name, offending the morality of the school principal. When Toffee, bowing to parental and peer pressures, breaks up with him, Jonny takes a flying leap into the nearby Frances Gary Powers Nuclear Plant. His radioactive body is buried at sea in a concrete coffin. Toffee becomes a teen-ager in mourning, but Jonny comes back from the dead as a nuclear zombie - comes back, as he so earnestly says, to graduate.

All of this attracts the interest of the scandal sheet editor, Flagrante, who prints the facts behind the lies but refuses to print anything negative about Nixon or Hoover. Jonny insists that beneath all the gangrenes I'm basically good, and indeed he is. At least Richard Roland, who plays him, is - good at singing, dancing and comic acting.

Good, too, are Richard Muenz as Flagrante and, in the most demanding role, Karen Murphy as Delilah. She occasionally indulges the show's surface invitation to mug, but she handles her songs extremely well and stops the show at least once.

Those songs, and virtually the entire score, are perhaps the happiest surprise. Writing music so extensive it sometimes plays as through composed in the Webber manner, composer Dana P. Rowe has used musical satire as a creative

PROM; Entertainment Update; Theater

basis. These are not mere spoofs of the Neil Sedaka/Carole King style. Mr. Rowe has added his own musical wit, along with an occasional, sneaky touch of compositional daring. And his Zombie Prom finale is breathtakingly catchy with its rich melodies, touches of dissonance and quirky time count.

The lyrics are well crafted, always metric and neatly rhymed, generally moving the story along and sometimes brilliant. Mr. Dempsey's humor is true to the show's deadpan style (You'd be a widow, Toffee is told, should she marry her zombie boy friend, before you're wed). It is also politically satiric (Where do you stand on the rights of the dead?) Most important, Dempsey's lyrics are singable and support the music while resting comfortably on it.

The consistency of material, performance and production is of course due, in large part, to the controlling hand of director Philip Wm. McKinley, who has made certain the show's style and tempo are crisp. Fortunate to have Tony Stevens' dances, McKinley has assembled a cast rich in experience. All of that shows Zombie Prom is a breath of freshness and vitality, an exhilarating sign of spring in today's musical landscape of spectacles and revivals.

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Company: ROLAND CORP (85%)

Ticker: 7944 (TSE) (85%)

Industry: NAICS339992 MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MANUFACTURING (85%); NAICS334310 AUDIO & VIDEO EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING (85%); SIC3931 MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (85%); SIC3679 ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS, NEC (85%)

Load-Date: August 5, 2011

Appendix E: Final Props List

Appendix F: Added Figures

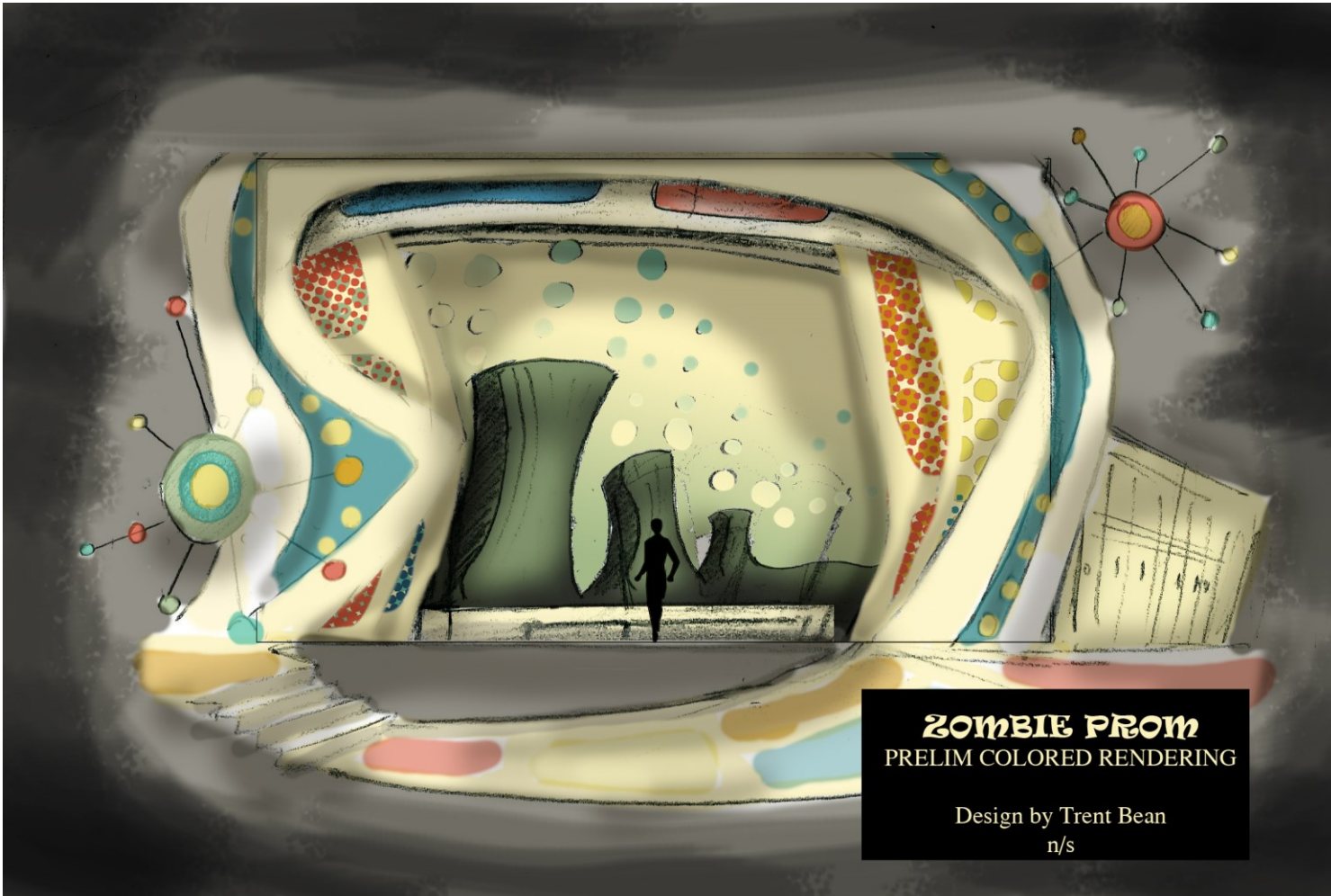


Figure 37. Preliminary Rendering

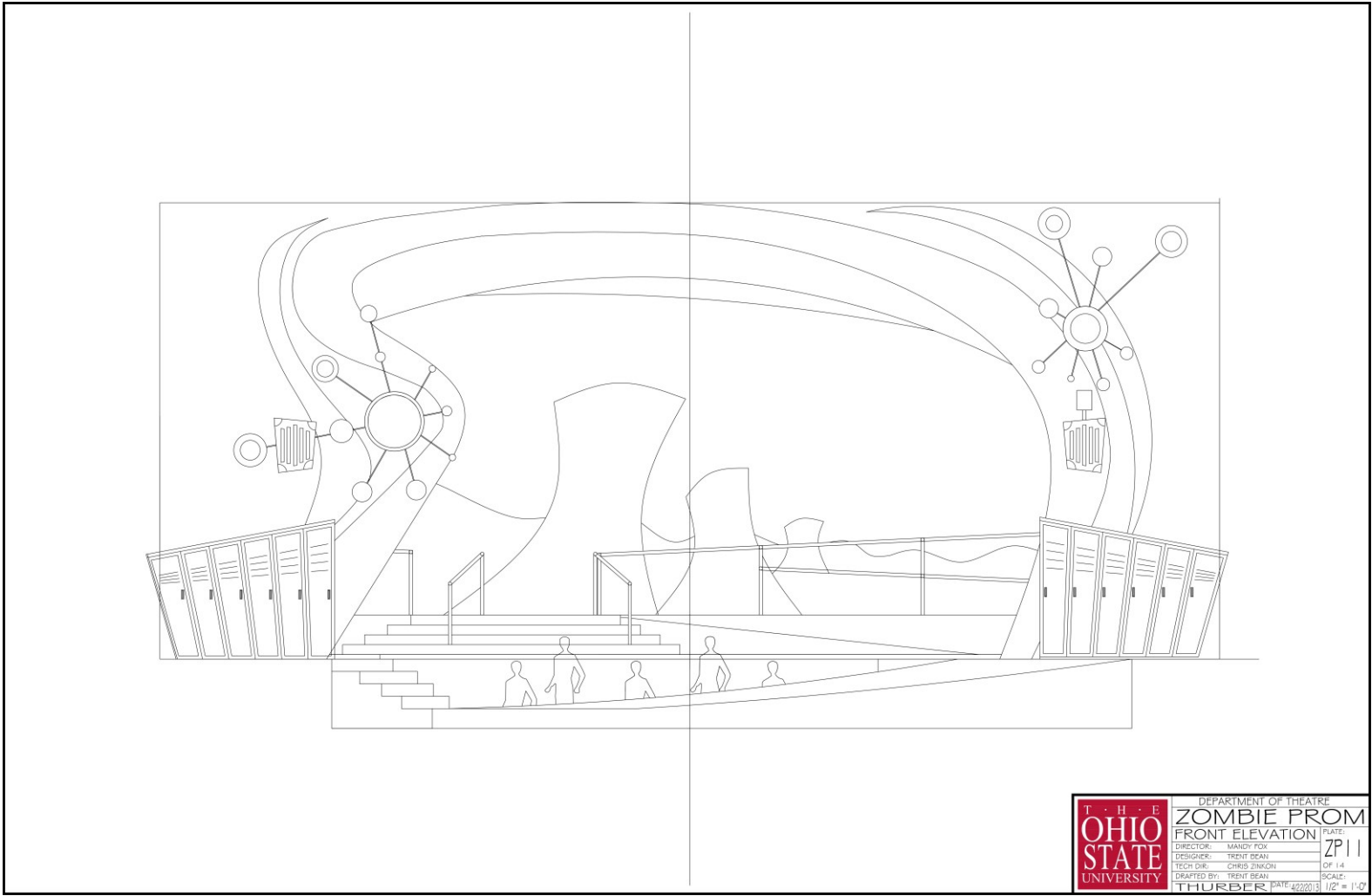


Figure 38. Front Elevation of Drafting

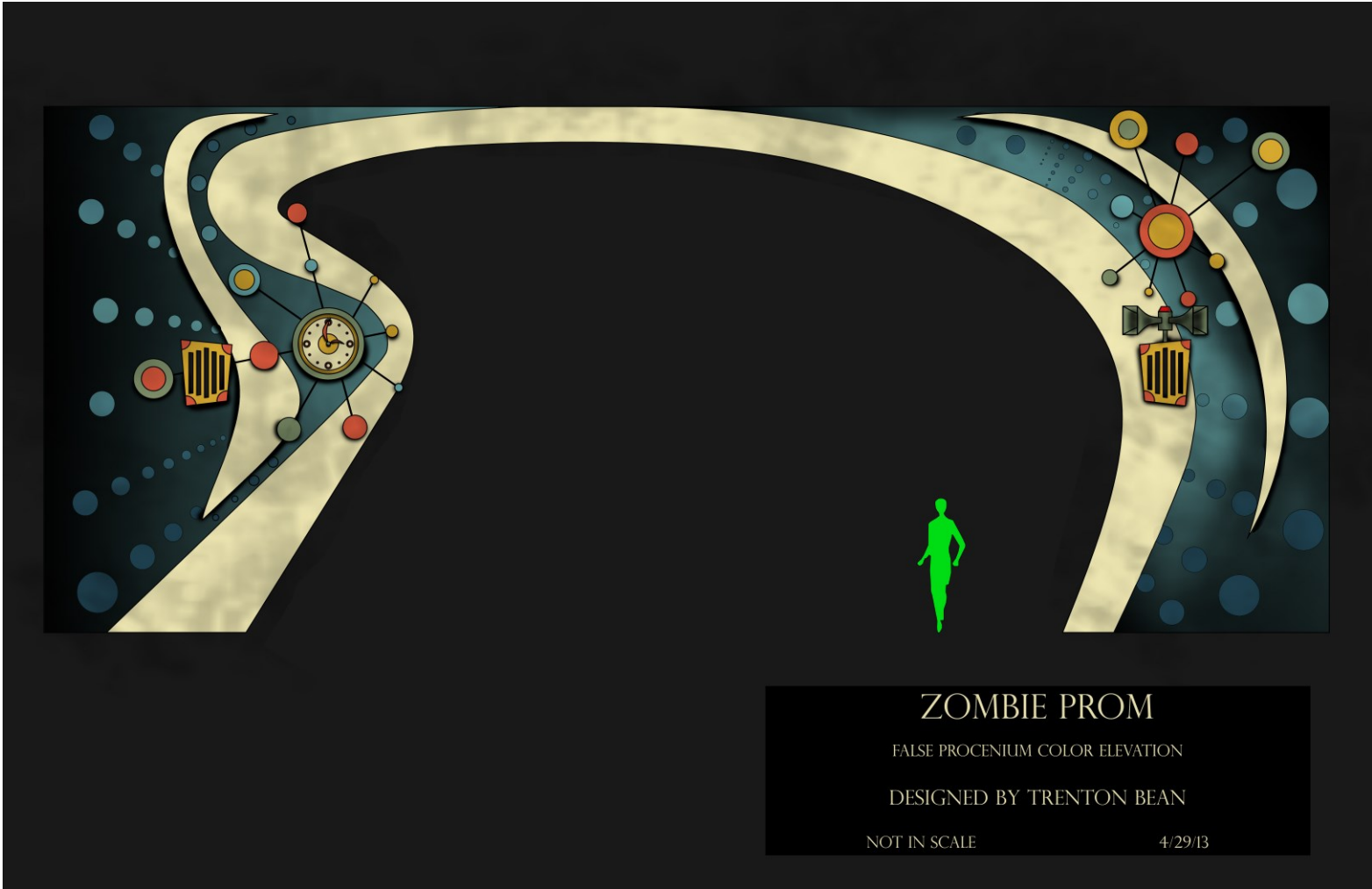


Figure 41. False Proscenium Paint Elevation

101

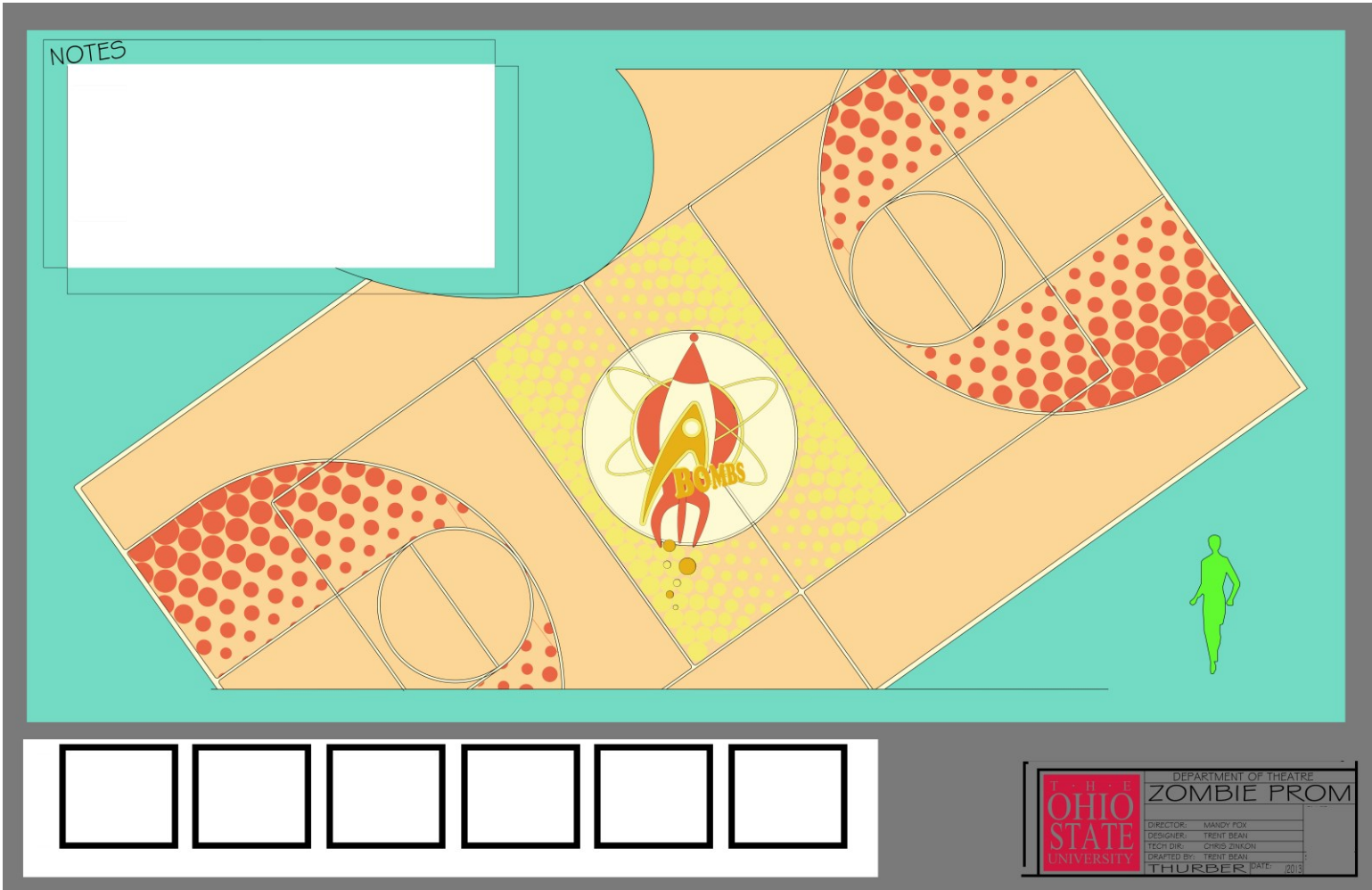


Figure 42. Floor Treatment Paint Elevation

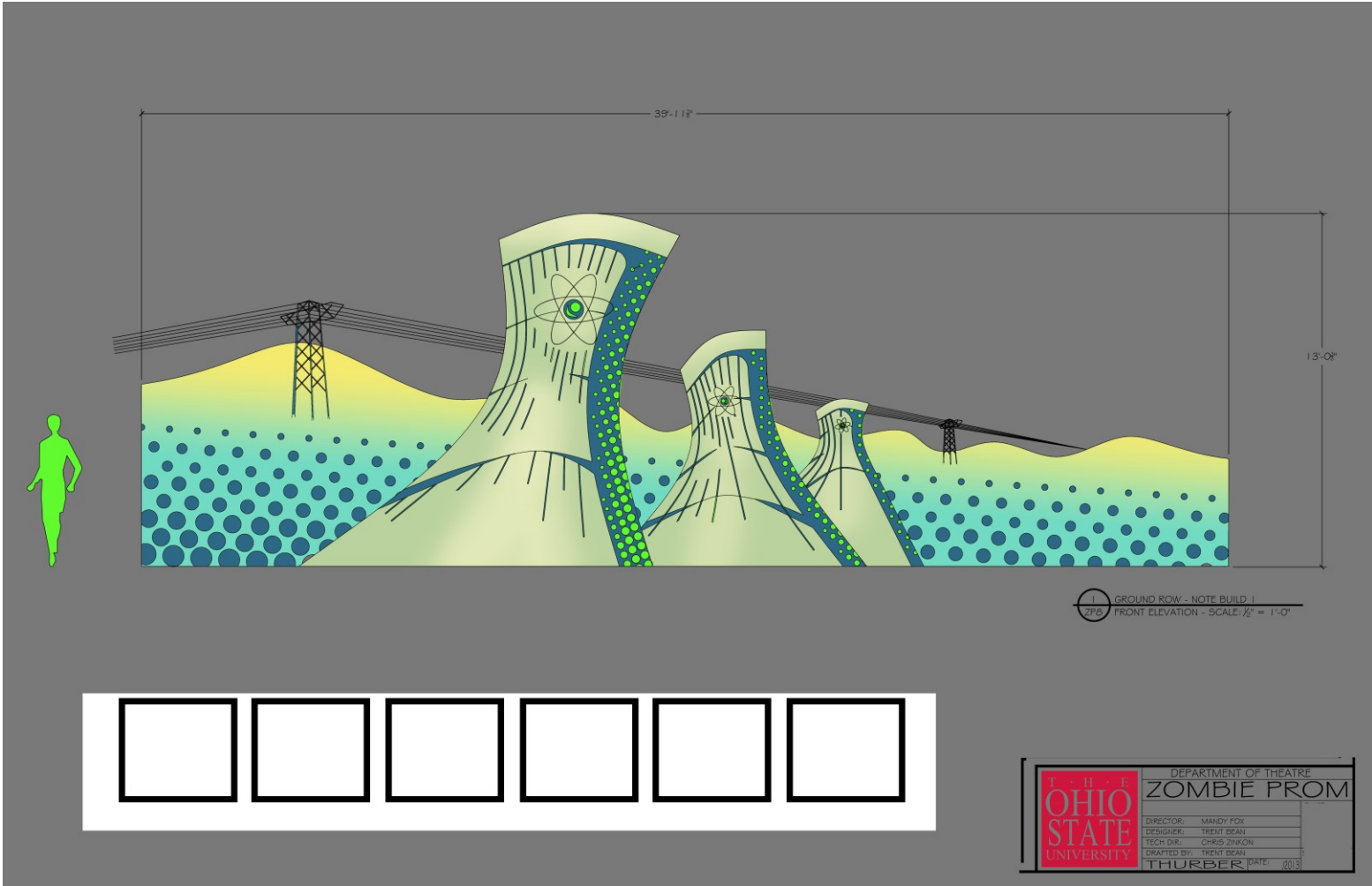


Figure 43. Groundrow Paint Elevation

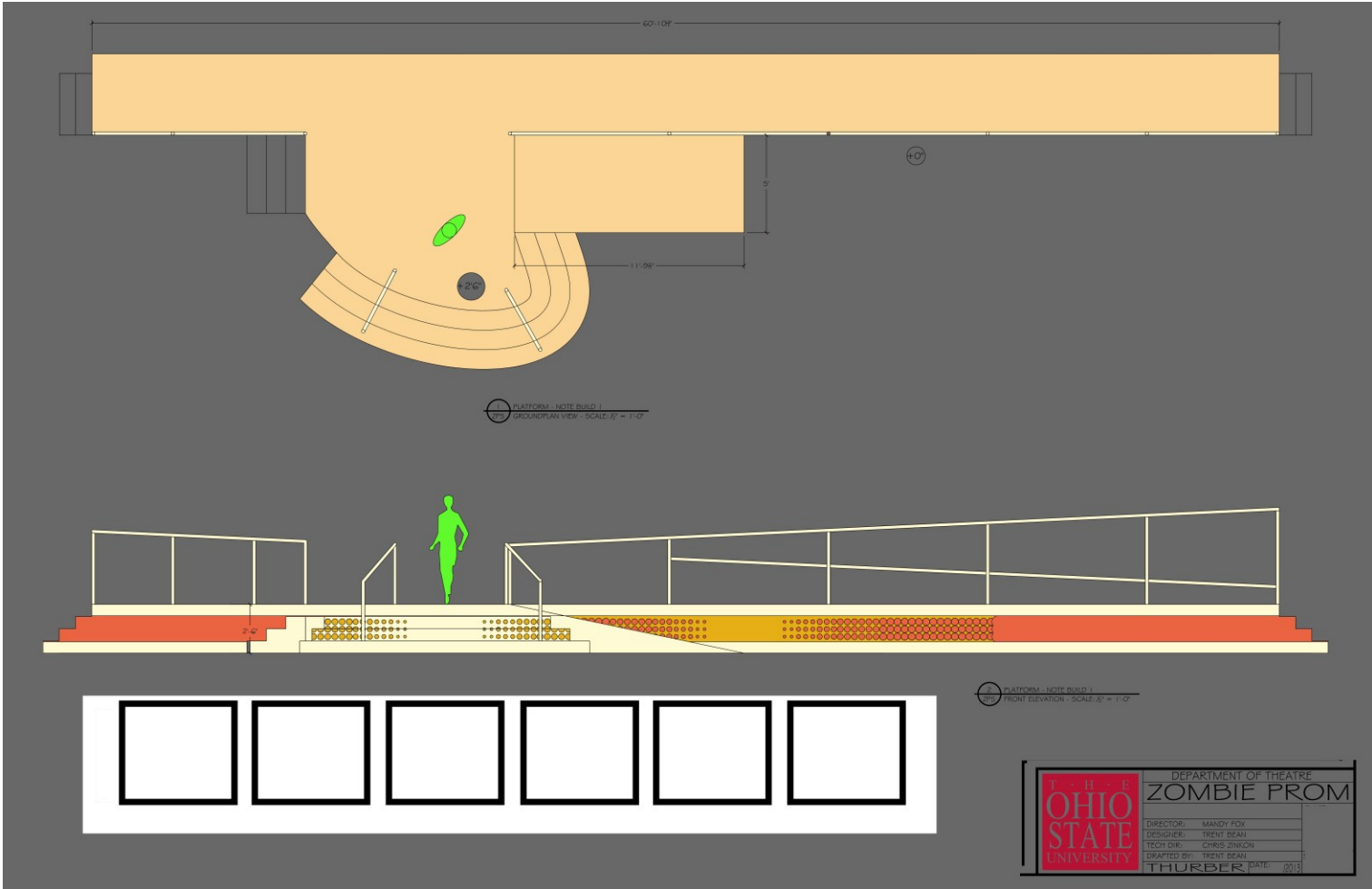


Figure 44. Platform Paint Elevation

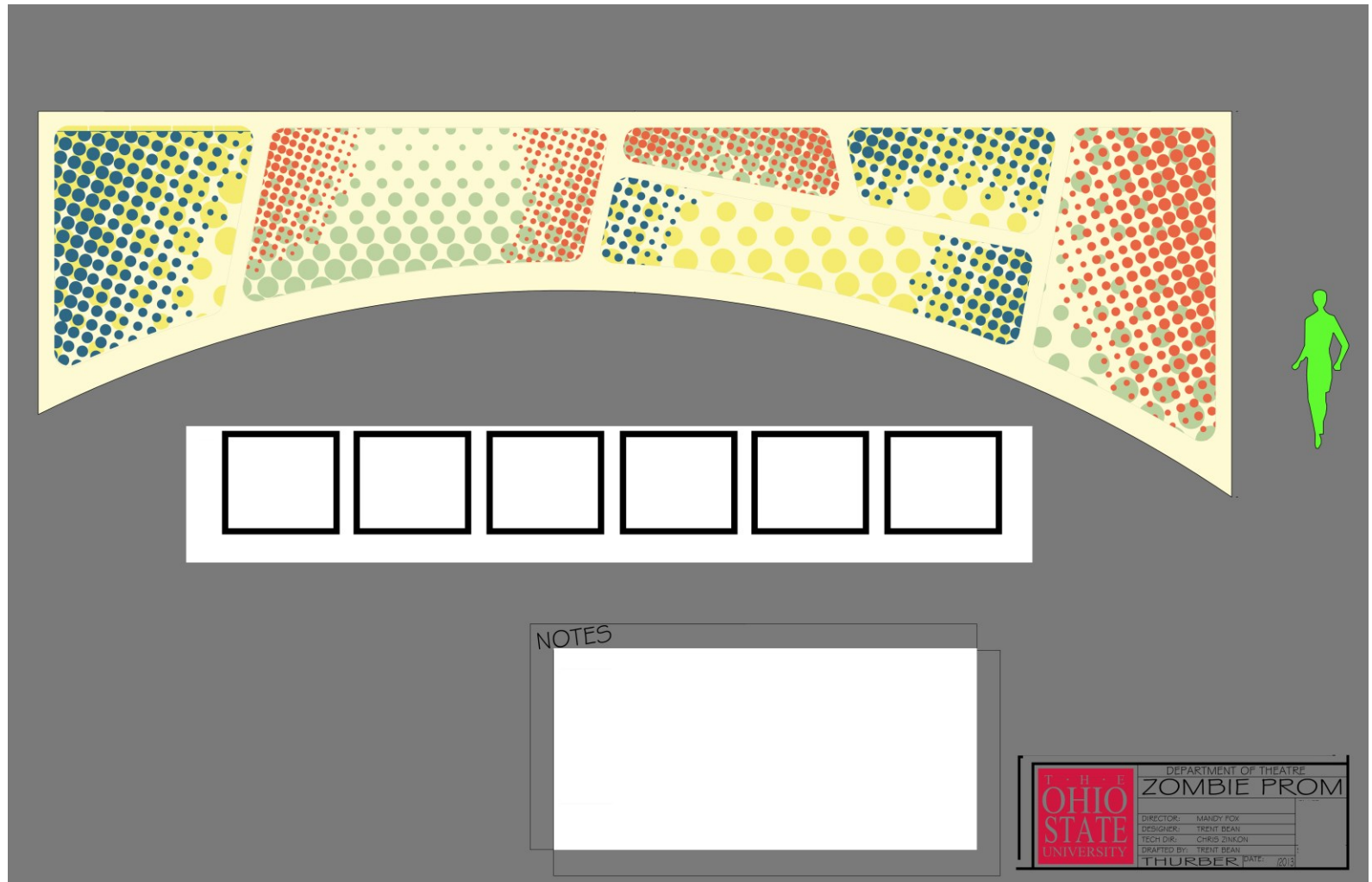


Figure 45. First Border Paint Elevation

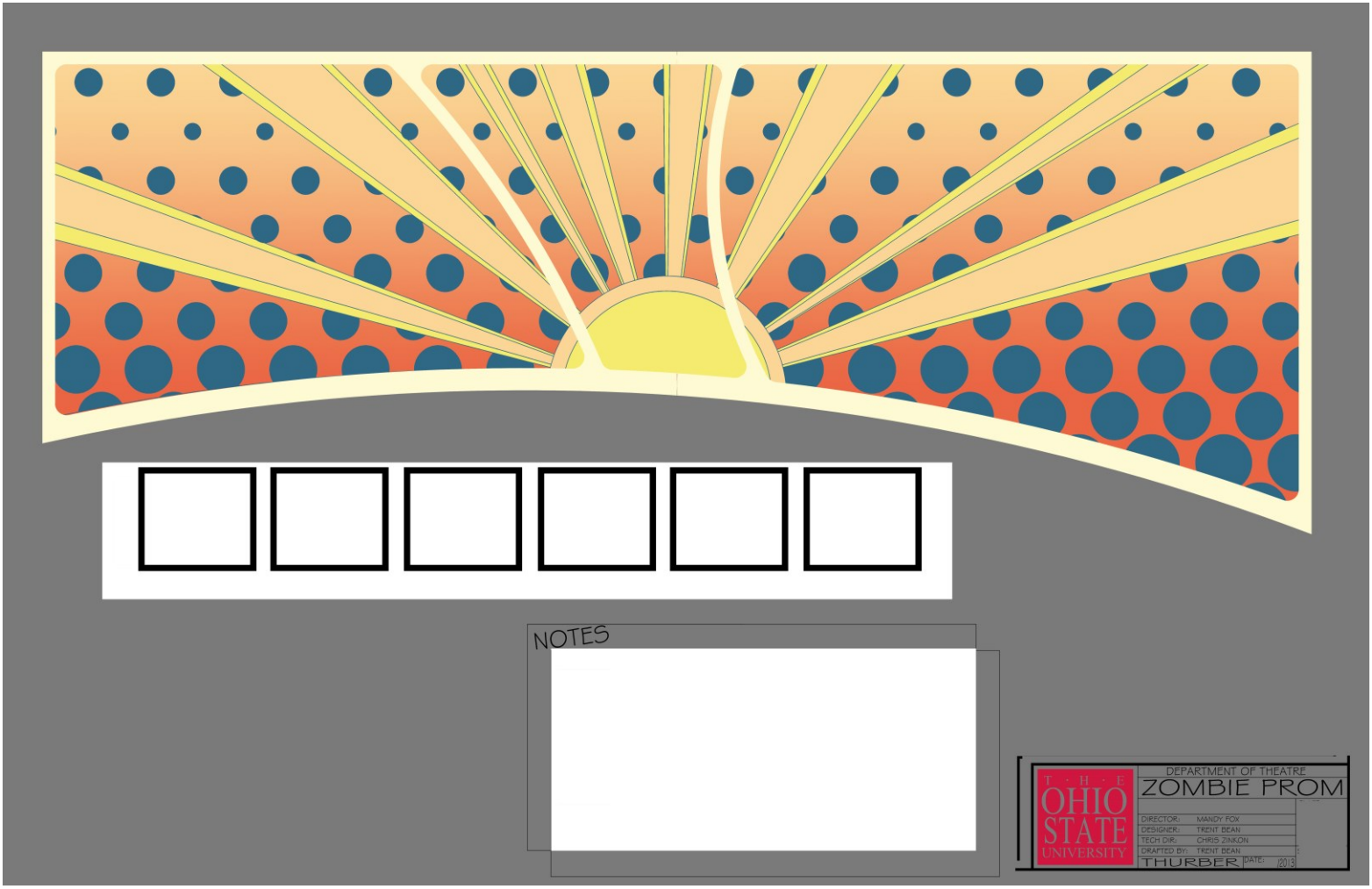


Figure 46. Half-Drop Paint Elevation

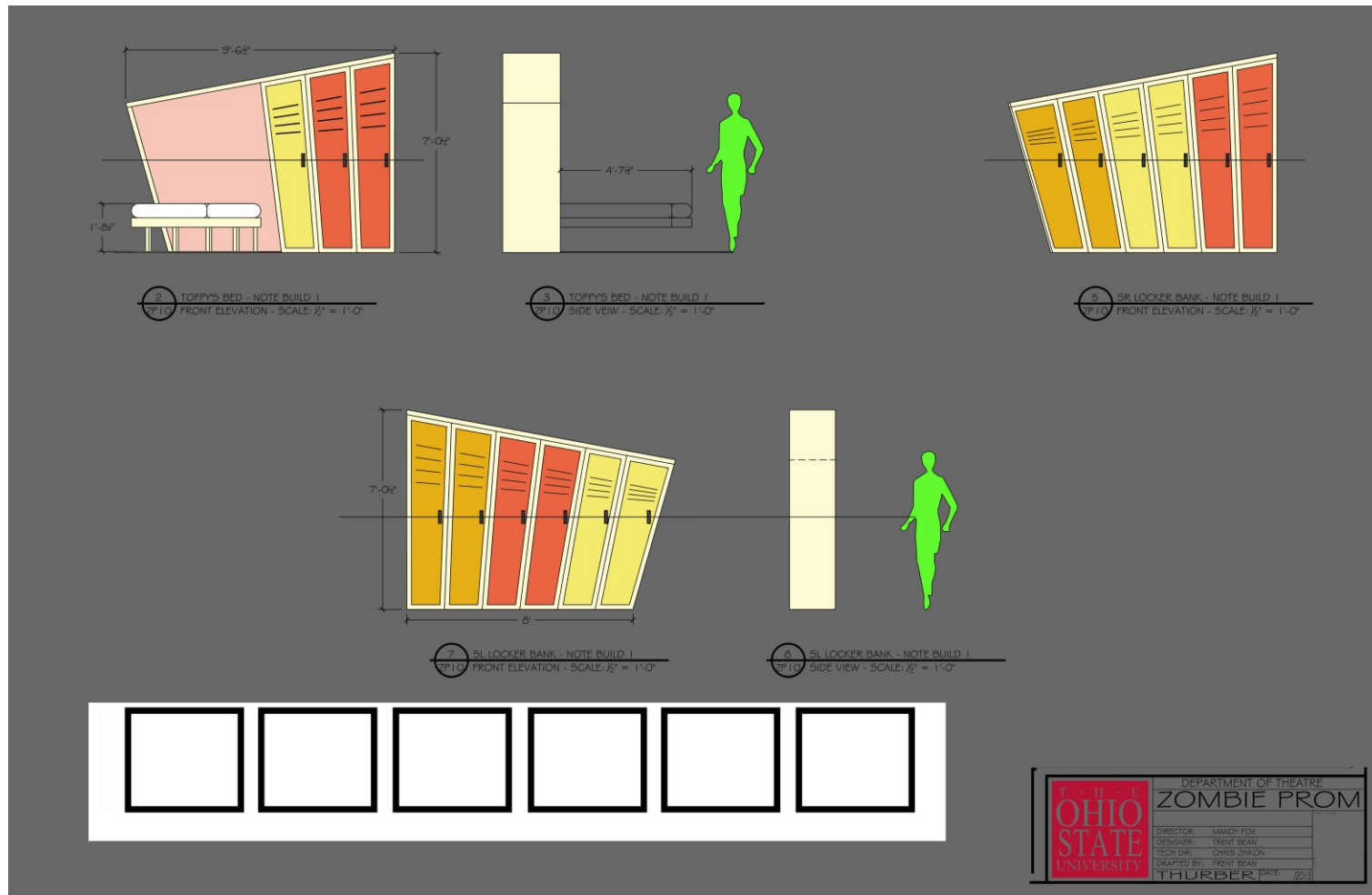


Figure 47. Lockers Paint Elevation

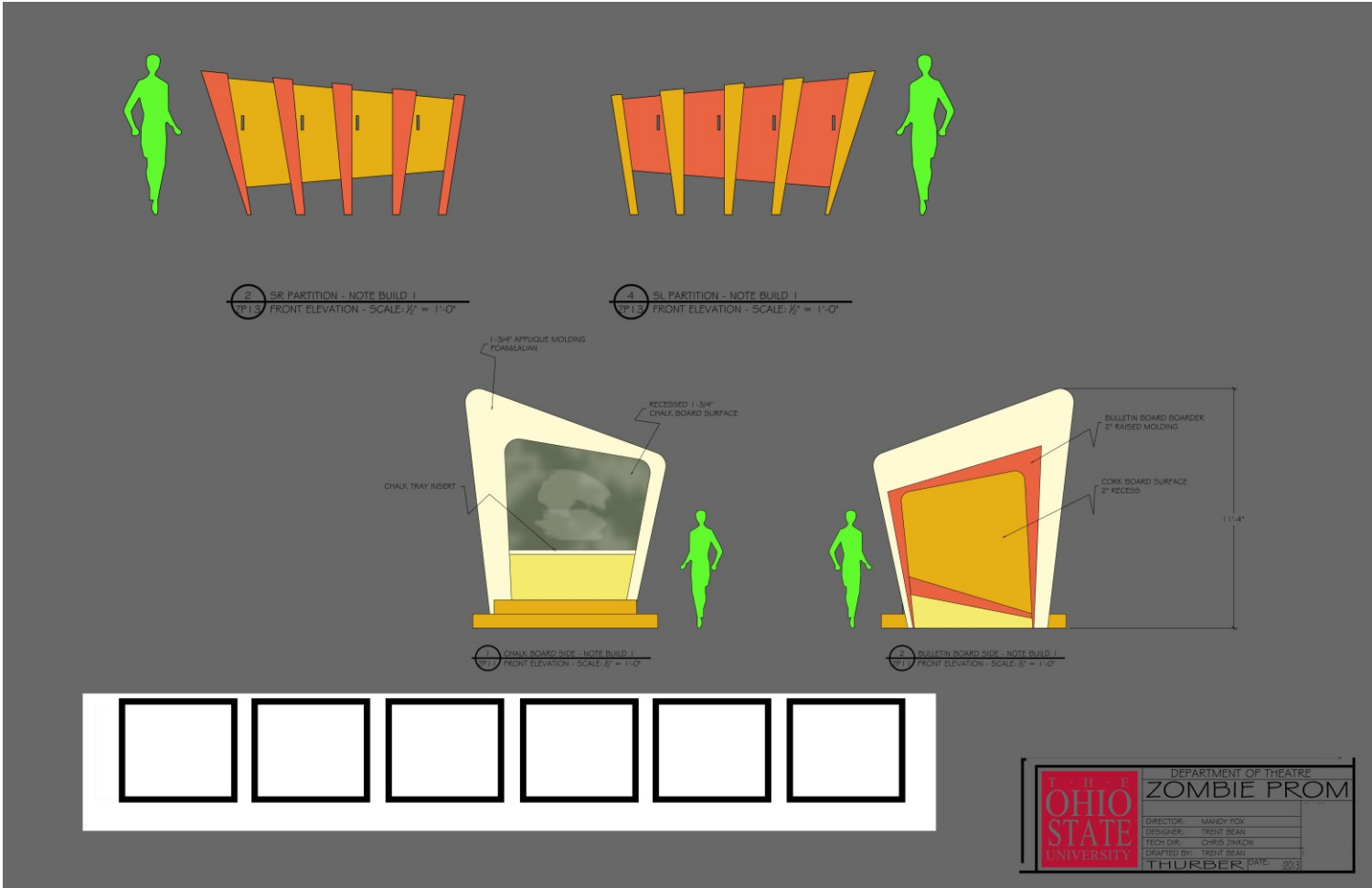


Figure 48. Mobile Units Paint Elevation

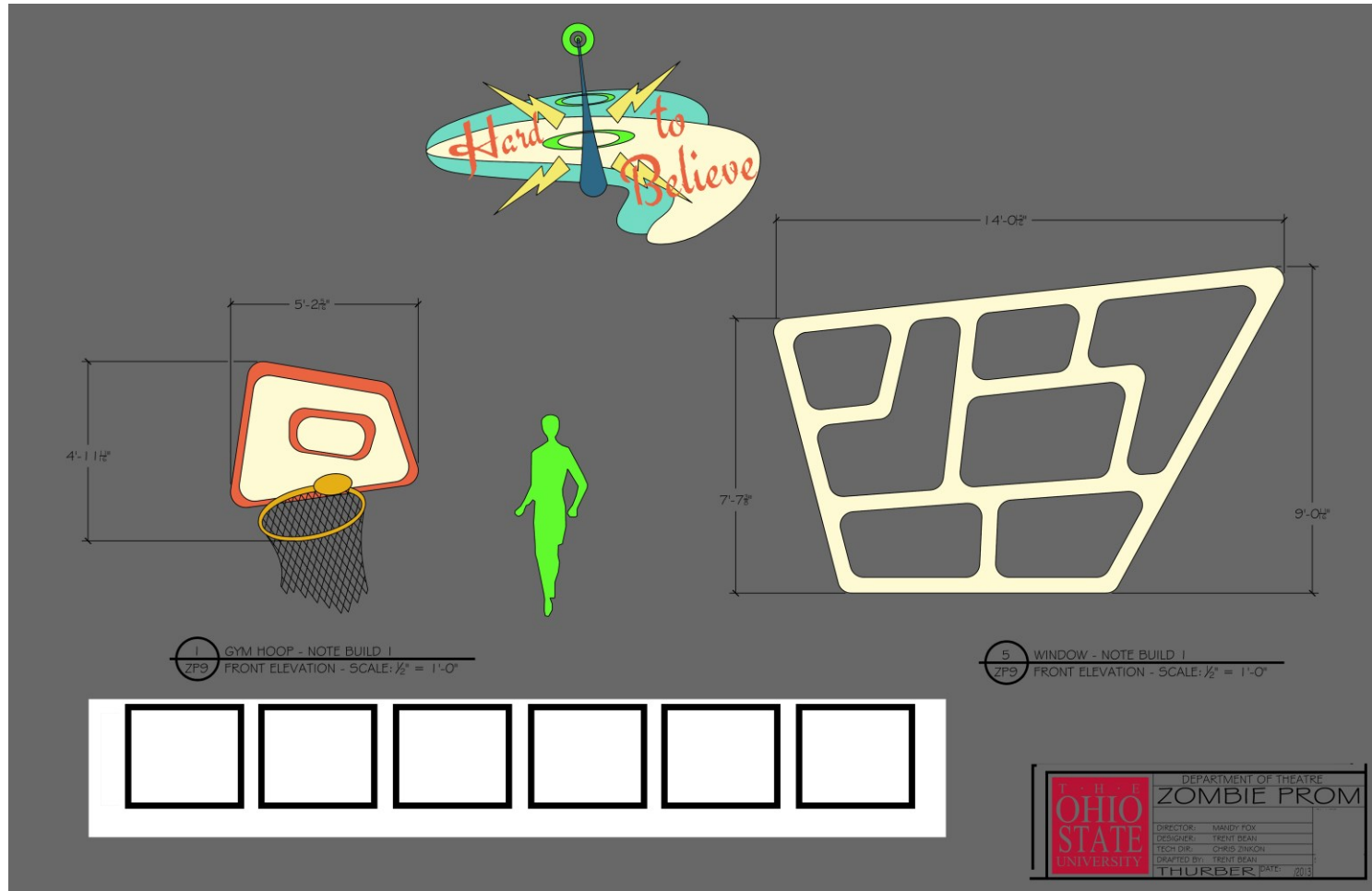


Figure 49. Hanging Pieces Paint Elevation

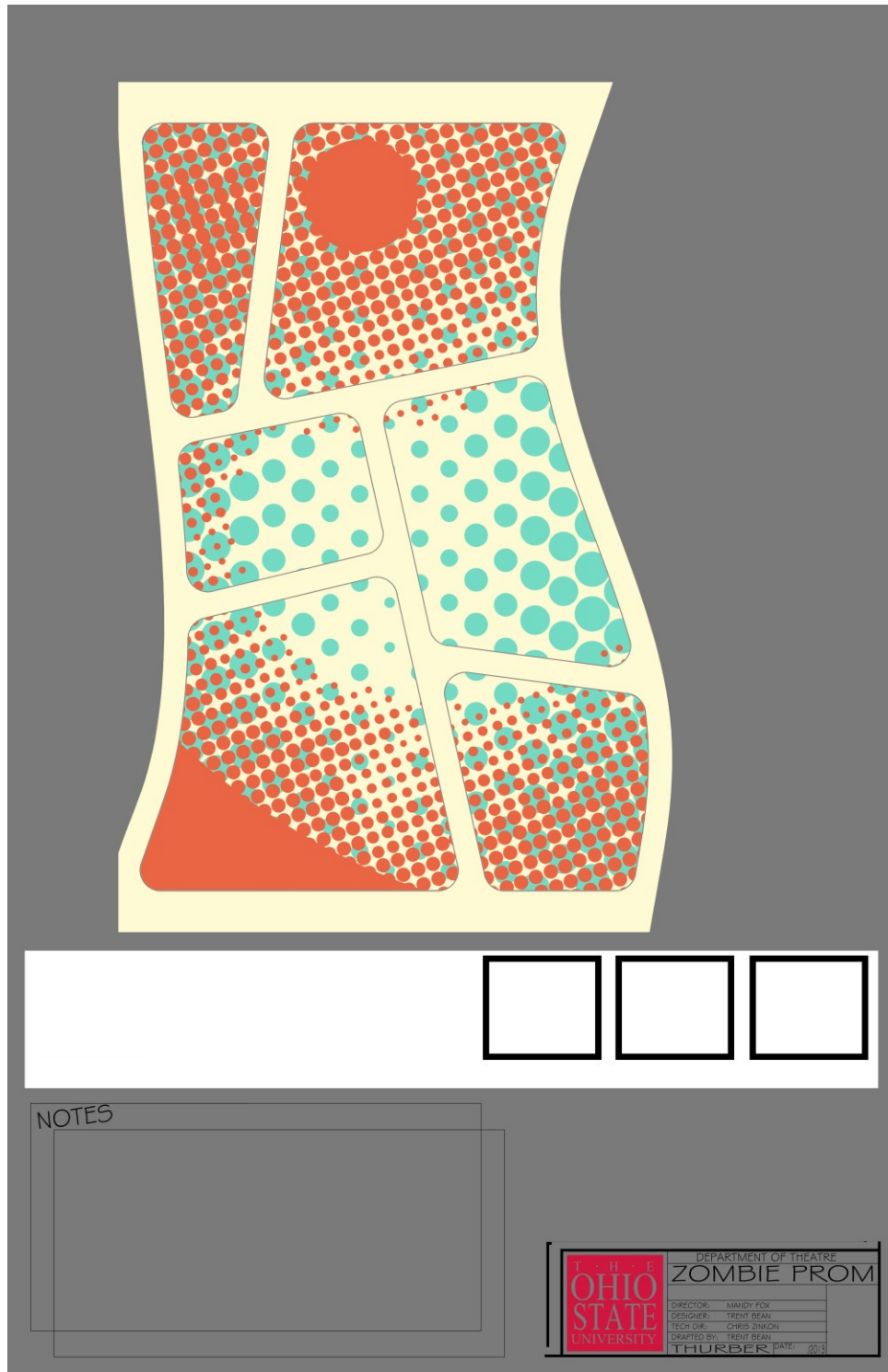


Figure 50. Wall D Paint Elevation

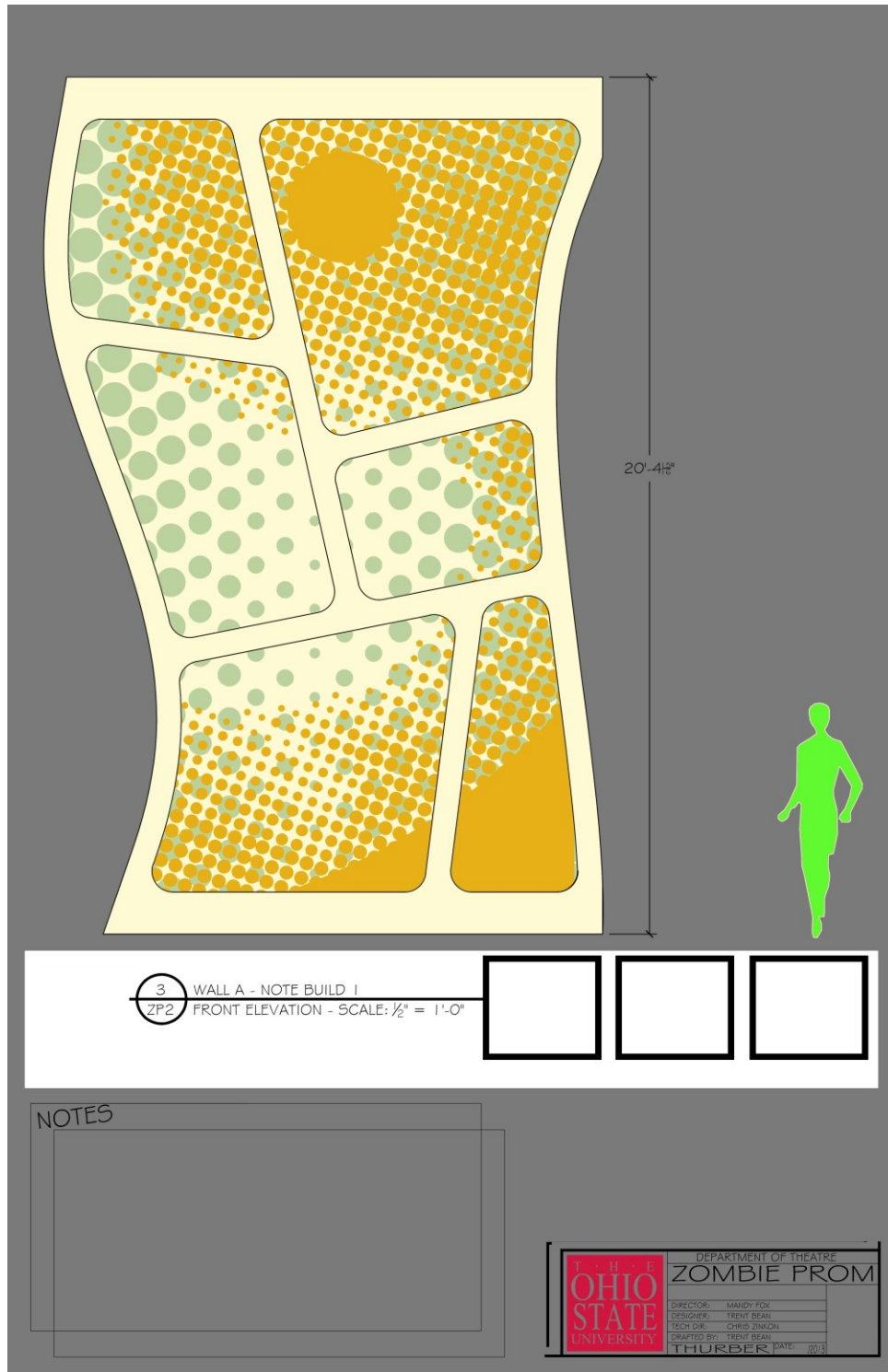


Figure 51. Wall A Paint Elevation

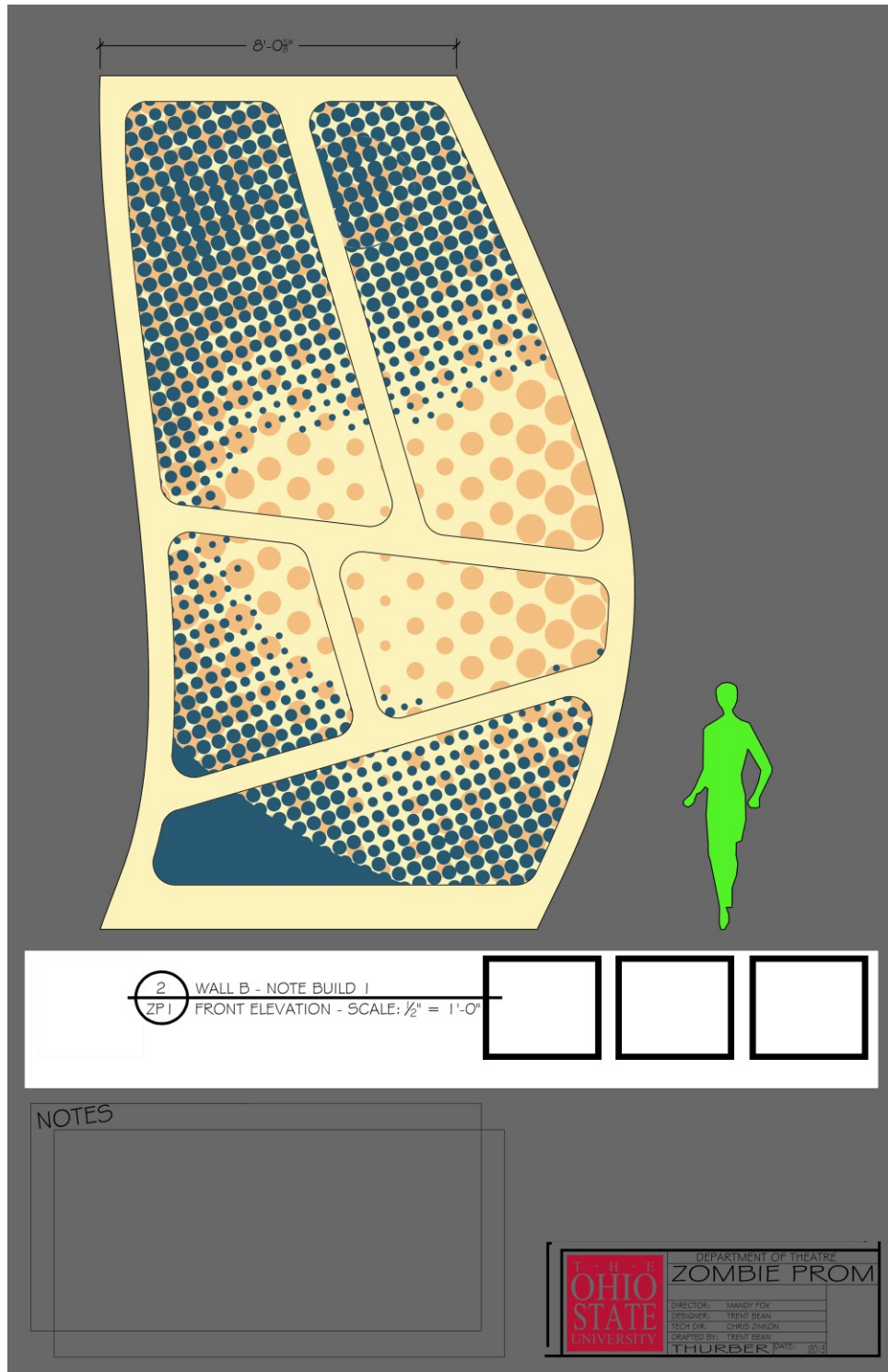


Figure 52. Wall B Paint Elevation

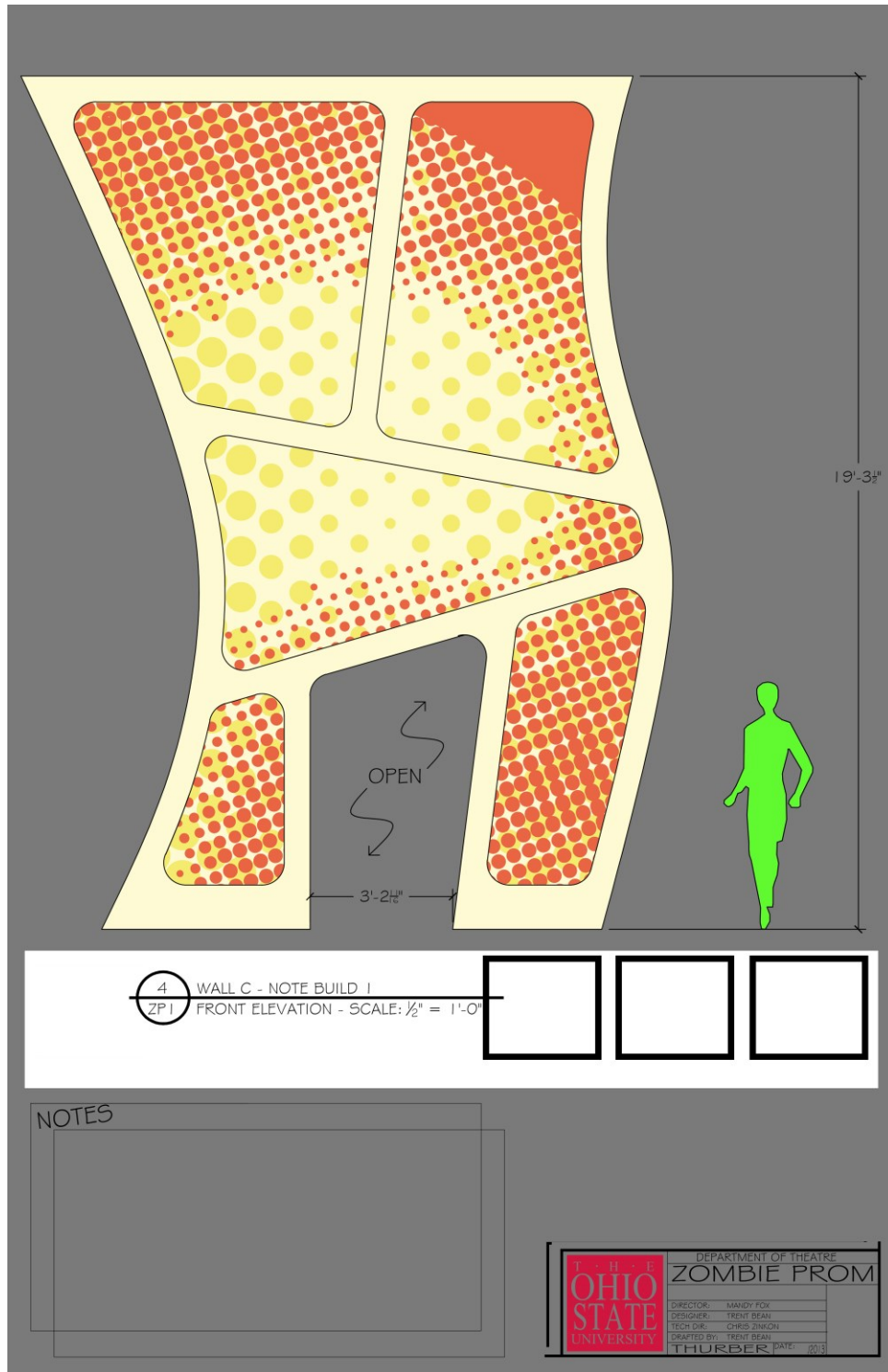


Figure 53. Wall C Paint Elevation

Appendix G: Story Board Documents

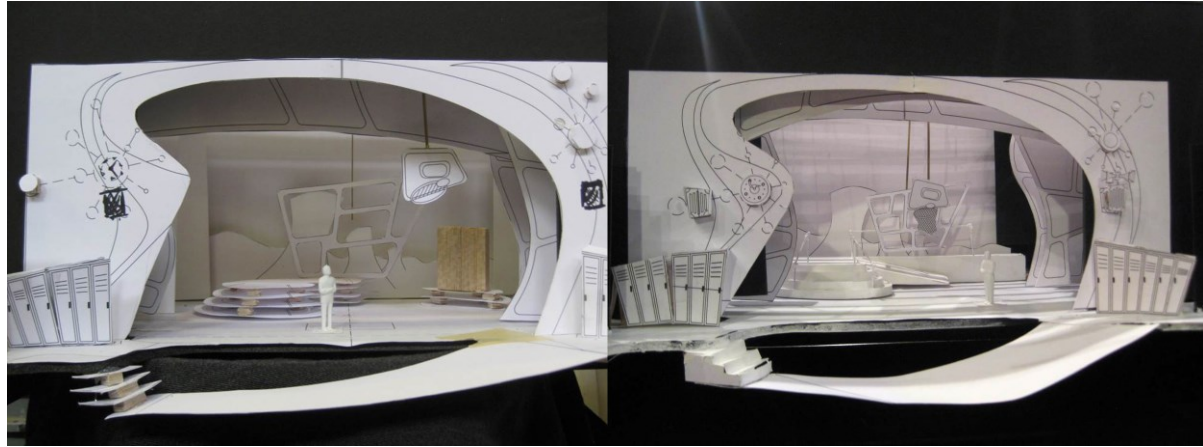


Figure 54. Storyboard Gym

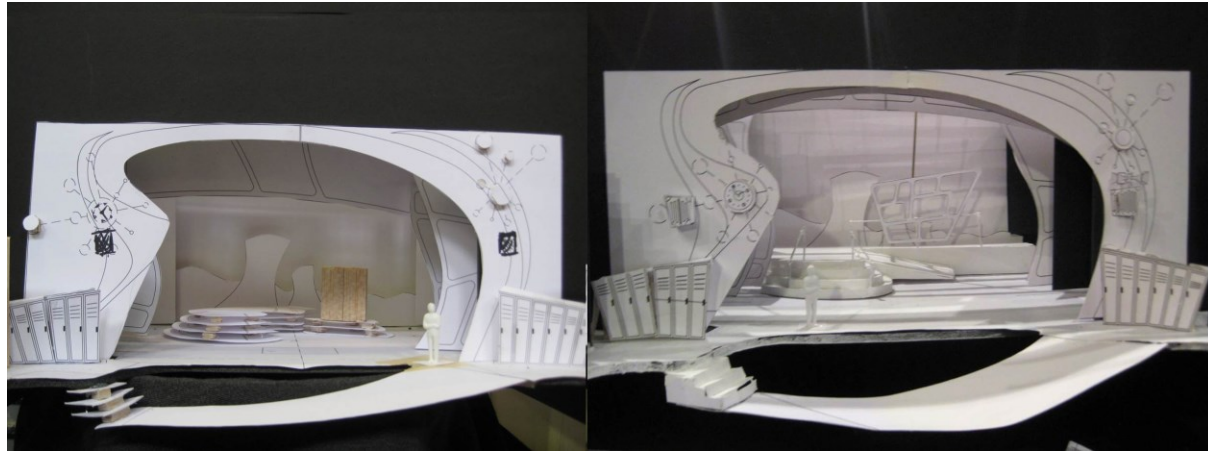


Figure 55. Storyboard Hallway

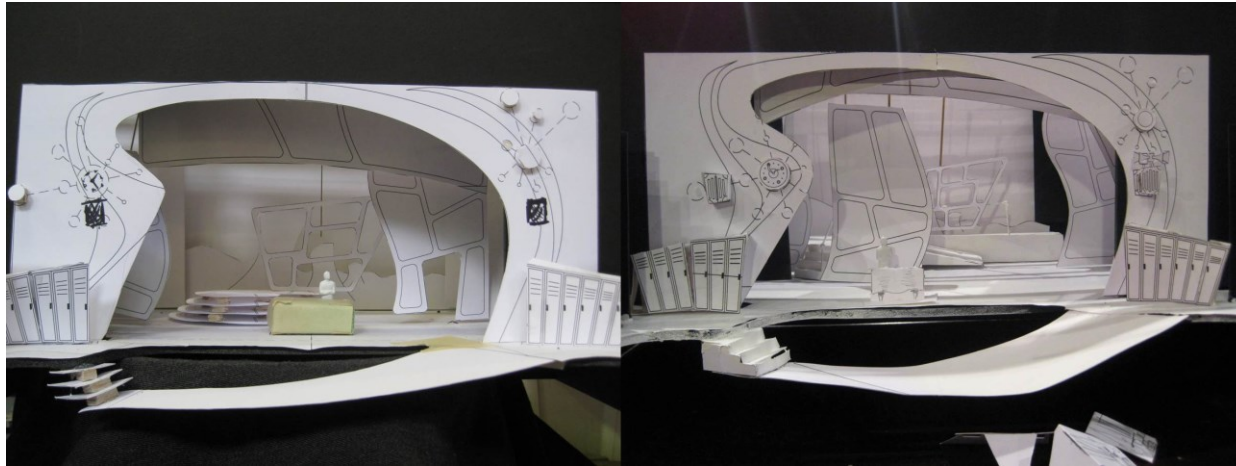


Figure 56. Storyboard Chemistry Class

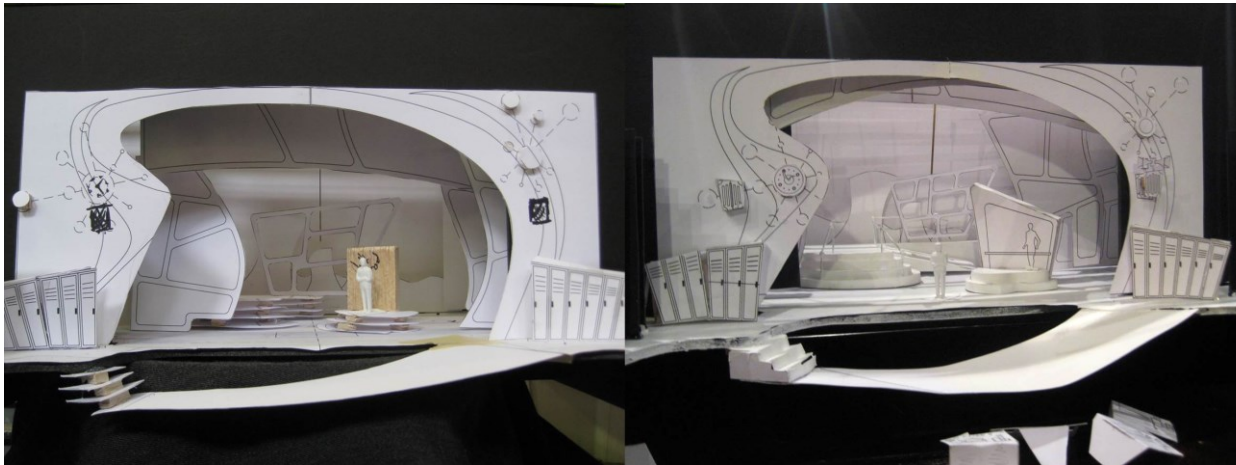


Figure 57. Storyboard Study Hall

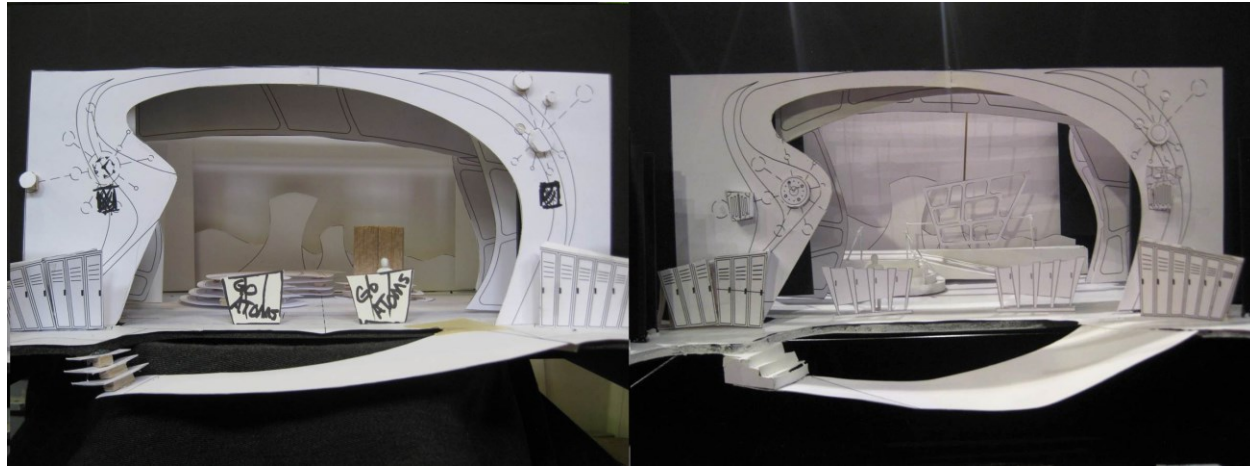


Figure 58. Storyboard Locker Rooms

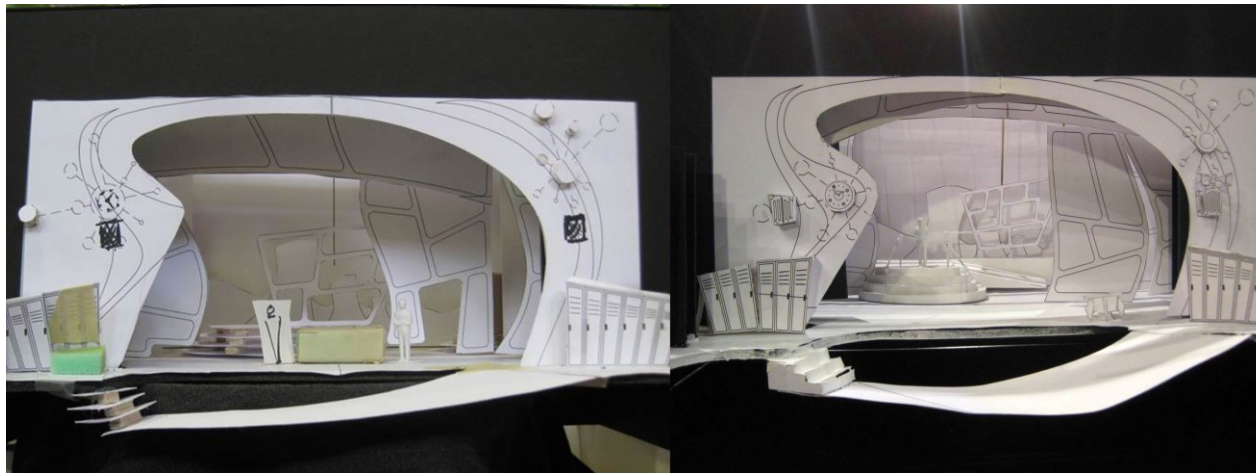


Figure 59. Storyboard Strict's Office

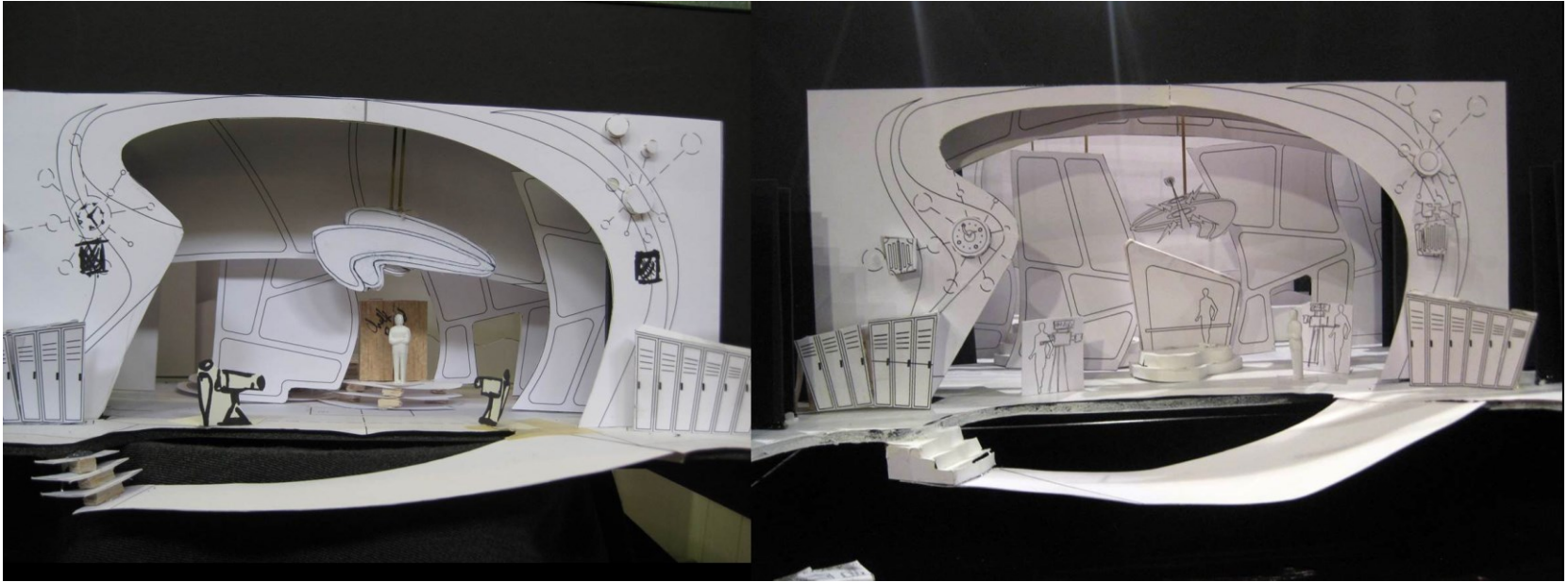


Figure 60. Storyboard Television Studio