NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Scenic Design in the Performing Arts–Spring, 2016
Theater, Dance, Film, and Television

Arts-UG 1031-4 UN Mon 11:00-1:45 Instructor: Salvatore Tagliarino
1 Washington Place (room 432) email: st1@nyu.edu
Spring 2016 Office hours: Mon. 2:30-3:30pm
I Washington Place, rm 402 Studio: (212) 580-281

Course Description
This course is an introduction to the principles and practice of theatrical scenic design. The vocabulary of visual imagery is woven into a history of theater, décor, and architecture and developed through the practice of graphic communication; that is, the disciplines of drawing, painting and model building necessary for the expression of visual ideas in set and lighting design. We explore how theatrical texts communicate in three-dimensional spaces and how designs respond to the author, director, and music. Students are expected to complete a series of scenic designs in models and two-dimensional presentations. Exercises integrate the principles of composition, line value, color pattern, geometric form, and rhythm in the creations of three-dimensional shapes within a theatrical space—as in the sequence of acts or scenes in a drama. We deal in depth with the discipline of design and presentation craft as well as the realities of shop fabrication and load-in at a studio or theater. Although this is not a course in art direction for film and/or television, we will discuss the differences between designing for the stage, film, and television.

Learning Goals
This course is an introduction to the principles and practice of designing scenery for the theatrical arts in which the scene establishes the structure for action and communicates mood and character. Designing for the theater, film, dance, and opera demands proficiency in a set of graphic skills—drawing, drafting, rendering, and model-making to communicate design ideas and blueprints and elevations for shop construction. The course will evaluate the graphic skills of each class member and introduce a set of techniques and practices that could ultimately develop into their mastery and a career in design.

The learning goals are to discover and nurture those graphic skills necessary for graphic communication of a production design. These are achieved through the practice of drawing, painting, drafting, architectural model building, and the basic principles of thinking in three-dimensions. The objective of the course is to improve these skills to enhance graphic communication in the service of theatrical arts.

Course requirements and grading policy
Students will be expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions and critiques of their work and that produced by others in the class (two unexcused absences will lower the grade by one whole letter. Contact the office if you anticipate missing a class, become sick, or are suffering through an emergency.

Complete all homework assignments. Homework, practical assignment and reading are due one week from the date assigned.
Class will consist of one hour of lecture or critique and two hours of practical work in class. Always bring your materials to class—if you are not sure, ask what materials are needed.

Graphic skills and the craft of communicating visual ideas can be learned with proper effort. Homework will be graded on the date due (late projects lose grade points).
Complete all in class exercises
Complete a final project
Students will be graded on their own progress—not as a group.

Students will receive mid-semester evaluations, and final grades are an evaluation of the level of understanding of course goals achieved over the semester. The final grade reflects a student’s growth and willingness to take on the challenges of learning these new skills and perspectives.

Effort (attendance, preparedness, attitude) 50%
Growth (ability to work beyond pre-existing level) 50%

The following chart defines the grades given at both mid-term and the end of the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Passable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Very unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Put away all of your materials at the end of class and at the end of each work session and throw away your own trash. No one else will do it for you. This is not the monitor’s job, but it is the monitor’s responsibility to ensure that everyone cleans their work area. Everyone must respect the studio as a shared workspace. All work must be cleared away ½ hour before the start of the next class in the studio. Chronic sloppiness will not be tolerated.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

It is assumed that all the work presented in this class is the original work of the student turning it in for critiques and course requirements.

“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honesty and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.academics/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy”
Plagiarism of any kind will be handled in accordance with Gallatin student discipline rules. The student discipline rules aim to make certain that suspected cases of plagiarism follow the same disciplinary process, regardless of the course or instructor. Consistency in disciplinary actions ensures fairness in how the school deals with plagiarism.

**Brief Bio**
Salvatore Tagliarino  
BA in Industrial Design, Pratt Institute  
MFA in Theatrical Design, New York University Tisch School of the Arts  
Additional studies: rehearsal period at Bayreuth Festival (1973) with Wolfgang Wagner  
Taught Fundamentals of Design at Tisch School of the Arts, Department of Theatrical Design (1974-2011)

Practicing Stage Designer: for Alvin Ailey Dance Company; the Houston Grand Opera, Of Mice and Men; Public Broadcasting System, Dance in America; ABC Television; CBS Cable Television, Outdoor Life. Network, Speedvision Network, . Theater design: Babes in Arms, Grand Night for Singing, Dracula, and Nutcracker—the musical, New York Shakespeare Festival, Byrdcliffe Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare on the Sound, and others.

Stage décor for Liza Minnelli and Frank Sinatra; Vegas shows for Fleetwood Mac, Ben Vereen, and Helen Reddy, and countless industrial shows including Ford, Bentley, Met Life, Sony, etc.

Member of the Executive Boards: New York Chapter of National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences and the American Society of Contemporary Artists.

Peter Brook, 1968/1996 *The Empty Space*. Simon and Schuster. (~$10 at amazon.com new)

**Supplementary Reading:** USITT Monograph Series, *Celebrating American Designers* including Tony Walton, Jules Fisher, Carrie Robbins, Willa Kim, Tharon Musser, Ming Cho Lee, Abe Jacob  
Igor Stravinsky, *The Poetics of Music*  
Aaron Copland, *Music and Imagination*

**Materials list for Scenic Design in the Performing Arts**—unless otherwise specified bring your materials to every class.  
Scale rule  
Triangles  
T. square
1 roll of yellow tracing paper
1 two-ply Bristol pad approximately. 12” X 14”
1 pad of tracing vellum paper approximately . 11”X 17”
Drawing pencils—HB, B, 2B, 3B, 4B
Rubber cement
Blank sketch book (unlined) approximately 9”X 12”
X-acto knife with blades
1 sheet of foam-core approximately 30”X 40”

Schedule of classes

Jan 25—Theory and Aesthetics of Theatrical Design
   All the world’s a stage and every man play many parts, while all else is scenery,
   architecture, costume, furniture, props, and lighting
   Theater, entertainment, and art as business and pastime
   The language of the visual theater: color, form, proportion, composition
   Introductory slide show on scenic design
   How the theatrical designer communicates ideas through sketches, plans, elevations, etc.
   Materials in class: two-ply Bristol pad, pencils (all weights)
   Homework—Wing and Drop model
   Reading: StageCraft , pp. 5-23; Empty Space, pp.9-41

Feb 1 Aesthetics of design in theatrical history, and review model homework.
   Xerox of set design history
   In class:
   Graphics: 1 point perspective—part 1
   Fieldtrip to exhibit at Tisch Department of Stage Design (721 Broadway—3rd floor)—12:45-
   1:45pm
   Homework: Research your favorite play, musical, opera or ballet and document its scenic
   design on the internet or at the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center. Bring Xerox
   copies of your research photos and drawings to the next class.
   Read: Stagecraft text pp.24-39 & Empty Space pp.42-64

Feb 8—Symbolic dimensions—orientation inside the theatrical space and Visualizing music—
   harmony, poetics and dissonance.
   Exploring the different design approaches to each media—cabaret, theater, opera,
   ballet, musical, film & television
   In class graphics: 1 point perspective part 2
   Homework: Do a presentation of the scenic design of your research 2-dimensionally or in a
   model
   Reading in Stagecraft, pp. 40-53 and The Empty Space, pp.65-99

Feb 15—no class Presidents Day

Feb 22—Set design—Naturalism, realism, surrealism, impressionism, constructivism et al.
   The effect of the box set, wing & drop, unit set, modular set, scene changes
   Review presentations of the set design homework
   Homework: Design Shakespeare’s Hamlet (your choice of venue)
Reading: *Stagecraft*, pp.54-67 & *The Empty Space*, pp. 98-141.

March 1—Film and Television (slide show)
Review of Hamlet set designs
In class rendering of Hamlet designs in perspective.
Homework: Revise and improve Hamlet set designs
Reading: *Stagecraft*, pp.68-119.

March 7—Survey of Broadway show drafting
In class graphic exercise—Set design rendering
No homework over spring break—go to the theater, opera, museums, etc., Student Center has coupons for half price tickets for arts presentations.
Supplemental reading: *Dramatic Imagination*, chapter 1

March 14-20—Spring break, no classes

In class—paint elevations for Hamlet set designs
Homework—finish your Hamlet paint elevation
Reading: *Stagecraft*, pp. 212-237; supplemental, *Dramatic Imagination*, chapter 2

March 28—Architecture, furniture, and the actor
In class—choose a Xerox of a period decor and use it in a set rendering
Homework—Pick a play, opera, musical, ballet, etc, and research the architecture, furniture, props appropriate for its period and setting. Bring this research to the next class.
Reading—*Stagecraft*, pp.182-212; suppl., *Dramatic Imagination*, chapter 3

April 4— The mystery and awe of the empty stage.
The process of setting a design from period research
In class—using your research set the design for your chosen theatrical piece
Homework—research materials to design a play, opera, musical bring all the requisite photos, Xeroxes, and drawings to the next class
Reading: *Stagecraft*, pp. 311-344; suppl., *Dramatic Imagination*, chapter 4

April 11—the mathematics of proportion: the geometry of man and nature. The sense of time and place: time as a design element and the rhythm of change
In class: work on research design of the set for your chosen theatrical piece and pick a show for your final project
Homework: read the script for your final project and do the research
Read: *Stagecraft*, pp.383-407; suppl., *Dramatic imagination*, chapter 5

April 18—The cosmic dance—man/woman, space/time, and the audience. Knowing and seeing beyond the language of the script in television and film
In class—review the research and script for your final project
Final Project: pick a venue and design scenery for your chosen show
Homework: Rough sketches, plans or model for the final project.
Supplemental reading: *Dramatic Imagination*, chapter 6

April 25—Rough sketches for the final project are due.
Critique of the graphic communication of the ideas for your final project
In class—everyone works on developing the plans and sketches and/or model for their final project.
Supplemental reading: *Dramatic Imagination*, chapter 7

May 2—Work in class on the final project
Homework: finish the final project

May 9—All projects are due
In class group critique of each final project.

**Office hours:** Monday 2:30-3:30pm by appointment
1 Washington Place, Room 402
Studio Tel: 212-580-2811