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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DEIGO

The Intersection of External and Internal—Space as People

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Design)

by

Kathryn Lieber

Committee in charge:

Professor Andrei Both, Chair
Professor Alan Barrett
Professor Judith Dolan
Professor Tara Knight
Professor Manuel Rotenburg

2012

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University of California, San Diego

2012

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LIST OF SUPPLEMENTAL FILES

File 1. Hedda1

File 2. Hedda2

File 3. JuneMoon1

File 4. JuneMoon2

File 5. Dybbuk1

File 6. Dybbuk2

File 7. ManWifeHat1

File 8. ManWifeHat2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all of my classmates from UCSD, especially those I had the pleasure of working with directly. Every interaction shapes who we are as people and as artists, and you have all changed who I am as a person and an artist, for better or for worse; though simply growing and changing and moving forward is always the right direction to go. It has been a great experience getting to work towards understanding you and your worlds. A special thank you to Josh Brody whose challenging directorial prompt for *The Dybbuk* was the spark needed to create not only a fabulous piece of theatre but also this abstract of a thesis. And thank you to Hedda and Wall for providing excellent, if challenging and often frustrating, subjects to create as physical worlds.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Intersection of External and Internal—Space as People

by

Kathryn Lieber

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Andrei Both, Chair

Humans have an instinctive need to personalize, and a great capacity to effect major customization of the world around them. We change the planet to suit our needs and our homes become an extension of ourselves. Since theatre is the heightened mirror of real life, it stands to reason that this instinct to personalize and customize our surroundings would be magnified on the stage. As a scenic designer, I have been exploring human relations to space, and how our need to adapt objects to us has imprinted our inner selves onto inanimate objects, imbuing them with a sense of character in their own right.

For realistic plays like *Hedda Gabler* or *June Moon*, the implications of this are straightforward. Hedda needs her curtains and the songwriters of Tin Pan Alley need a piano. Hedda projected a sterile and foreboding environment while our affable musicians called for a certain amount of endearing clutter. These signifiers are less obvious in the more abstract and metaphoric plays. For *A Man, His Wife, and His Hat* the characters bled into their surroundings to the point of

merger, but the walls themselves revolted and became their own personality. I had to create character through paint and projections. The process I went through to find character in architecture was perfect preparation for *The Dybbuk*. By merging the visual signifiers of Judaism with the architectural cues related to spirituality, I created a space that simultaneously spoke of the Jewish people and welcomed the varying spiritual ideas of the audience.

My designs are always pushing towards life, towards having, or at least implying, a life of their own as derived from the lives of their inhabitants. Scenery can be people too.