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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Needlessly Complicated

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre And Dance (Design)

by

Colin Rogan McGurk

Committee in charge:

Professor Andrei Both
Professor Judith Dolan
Professor Victora Petrovich
Professor Manuel Rotenberg

2011

The thesis of Colin Rogan McGurk is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to Drew Francis who gave me the tools I needed to succeed in this program, and without who's influence I would still be a mechanical engineer.

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John Jameson for always being around and helping me to remember stress is temporary.

Orli for showing me the most important thing, and bringing balance to the force.

My parents for their absolute and unwavering support in everything I do.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Needlessly Complicated

by

Colin Rogan McGurk

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre And Dance (Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Andrei Booth, Chair

I began my work at UCSD with designs that were more complicated externally with as many wild elements as possible. I have learned how to take a wide range of ideas, and instead of spreading them thin across a broad swathe of elements I can now incorporate them into a rich yet narrow pallet of carefully tuned elements. With *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, I had taken the needlessly complicated ideas that could have been externalized, and fed them into the details of my design. Certain critical concepts were contained within individual elements such as the texture of the floorboards, or the "hand carved" patterns to echo traditional African art where a simple clean line would have sufficed.

With *Space Between*, directed by Alicia Peterson Baskel, my only design elements were white gallery walls, and the art that was displayed on them. Here, the positioning of drawings and videos was absolutely critical with mere inches making

worlds of difference, and minor subtleties of wall texture speaking volumes about nature of the space. The twist was that after all of this precise work, these moving walls were released to the dancers to improvise with them however they wanted. Having calculated all of details so carefully afforded us the room for total improvisation with movement. The lesson I have drawn is that the more limited the elements, the more precise the fine tuning required, but the more universal their ability to connect, and the more likely an audience will read them properly.