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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

“Creating Worlds: Scenic Design for Hamlet”

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

in

Theatre and Dance (Design)

by

Jenna Carino

Committee in charge:

Andrei Both, Chair
Judith Dolan
Mark Guirguis
Manuel Rotenberg

2015

The thesis of Jenna Carino is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2015

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Parents Jo and Peter Carino, to Donald Ruge, to my husband Dominic DiGiovanni, and to everyone who has supported me throughout my journey as a designer. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to two undergraduate professors, Alma Becker and David Yergan – though you have left this world, your hearts and your beautiful souls are remembered fondly.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“Creating Worlds: Scenic Design for Hamlet”

by

Jenna Carino

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2015

Professor Andrei Both, Chair

A working designer is first and foremost a collaborator. The set design for a production is imperative on how collaboration begins, and the outcome of the design is an outcome of the success of that collaboration. In the world of theatrical production design, a successful collaboration is based on the communication skills of the designer, the image research and ability to go beyond the text, and of course, a deep knowledge of the show at hand. A successful design will then show that collaboration at it's finest - the established world that has been created to tell the story.

The set design for Hamlet, Directed by Michael Moran, in the UCSD Mandell-Weiss Theatre was a unique challenge and a collaboration process that started months before the show was open, and in the end yielded a successful and visually engulfing result. Set in a modern to almost futuristic tone, the world of Hamlet revolved around a few central ideas - For Hamlet, Elsinore is a prison and for the rest, it is where the evils of the world and the truths locked away behind a cold, clean facade. The Ghost enters the world to reveal the truth to Hamlet, and charges Hamlet with revealing that truth to others. The scenic design reflects Hamlet's journey in revealing the truth and exposing Elsinore for what it is. Standing at 16 and 24 feet, the walls of Elsinore shift and slide into different configurations every act and expand the set throughout the play. Every prop and detail of this design had to be carefully researched and thought out to fit into this stark and monumental design. Overall, the aesthetic was modern, sleek, and expensive, and the design was highly functional to allow for flexible staging.

Due to careful collaboration and a smattering of image research, the scenic design for Hamlet was not only visually cohesive, but it served the purpose of the play, established a world for the characters to live in, and helped fulfill the vision of the director.