Teaching Philosophy and Experience

Mentorship for an Evolving Landscape As an educator in Scenic Design, my foremost goal is to equip students with the skills, confidence, and adaptability needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. I view my role less as an instructor and more as a mentor, preparing students for life after graduation from day one. While rooted in the traditions of theatre, my teaching extends across Film, Television, Events, and Themed Entertainment, encouraging students to envision careers that match the breadth of opportunities available to creative designers today. I want students to understand their resources so they possess the agility to pivot in their design careers as the industry shifts.

Bridging Tradition and Innovation I emphasize a comprehensive foundation in scenic design, beginning with spatial awareness, material comprehension, and design aesthetics, and extending into collaboration—an indispensable skill in this field. My courses balance traditional methods, such as hand-drafting and tactile rendering, with advanced technologies including Vectorworks, Twinmotion, and AI-driven design tools. By layering old and new methods, I encourage students to respect the process while embracing innovation. My objective is to ensure that a student's toolkit is never the limiting factor of their imagination.

Inclusive Pedagogy & Accessibility Recognizing that each student learns differently, I employ versatile teaching strategies. Some thrive in communal settings, while others find strength in individual exploration. Accessibility is a cornerstone of my pedagogy: I integrate digital platforms like Canvas's immersive reader, supplemental video tutorials, and hybrid tactile-digital assignments to meet students where they are. By reducing the friction of learning complex tools, I allow students to focus on the sophistication of their design choices.

Building Resilience and Community My own career trajectory informs my mentorship. Early on, I struggled to find my voice and learn the art of self-promotion. Today, I guide students not just toward strong portfolios, but toward resilience, self-advocacy, and confidence in their ideas. Beyond the classroom, I strive to create a positive design culture. At Stephens College, I championed the development of a shared studio space where students could work beyond their dorm rooms, exchange supplies, and collaborate across disciplines. This communal environment fostered both creativity and belonging, creating a safety net for risk-taking.

The Classroom as Laboratory Finally, I view teaching as a continuous act of research. Just as I bring current industry practices into my classroom, I also explore emerging technologies to expand students' horizons. Recently, I incorporated AI tools like MidJourney into my coursework, inviting students to critically explore both the opportunities and limitations of these new mediums. For me, the classroom is a laboratory for experimentation—a space where design education remains responsive to the shifting landscape.

Conclusion My teaching philosophy centers on preparing students not only as designers, but as collaborators, innovators, and leaders. By combining foundational craft, technological literacy, and a strong culture of community, I aim to ensure they graduate ready to shape the future of scenic design across theatre and beyond.

THA 372: Entertainment Design and Collaboration

Instructor: Brandon PT Davis
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Office Hours: [By Appointment]

Course Description Using theatre design skills, this course bridges the world of commercial design—such as theme parks, restaurants, interactive kiosks, museums, film/television, and industrial shows—that are all centered around telling a story or selling a concept. This course challenges the theatrical designer to embrace the unique constraints of commercial work, including integration, longevity, and audience engagement.

Course Objectives By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Work collaboratively to develop and communicate design concepts for non-traditional venues.
2. Analyze client needs and define the narrative within a commercial design process.
3. Utilize digital tools (SketchUp, Twinmotion, Photoshop) to visualize complex environments.
4. Understand the production pipeline for themed entertainment and immersive experiences.

Required Software & Materials

- Vectorworks / SketchUp (3D Modeling)
- Twinmotion (Real-Time Rendering)
- Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, InDesign)

Evaluation & Projects

Assignment	Points	Description
Guest Presenter Evals	200	Written responses to industry guest lectures (4 total).
Project 1: Theme Park R&D	50	Initial research and concept development for a park zone.
Project 2: Themed Maze	300	(Midterm) Full design package for a walk-through attraction, including floor plans and guest flow analysis.
Project 3: Mascot Design	100	Character design and branding integration.

Assignment	Points	Description
Project 4: Arena Remodel	100	Renovation concept for a sports/entertainment venue.
Project 5: Restaurant	550	(Final) A comprehensive semester-long collaboration project. Includes Preliminary Treatment (100), Design Updates (150), and Final Pitch (200).
Total	1300	

Weekly Schedule

Module 1: Foundations of Immersive Design

- Week 1: Introduction to Themed Entertainment & History of the Industry.
- Week 2: Concept Development & "Blue Sky" Ideation.
- Week 3: Presentation Techniques for Commercial Clients.
    - *Guest Speaker: Jess Coil (Industry Professional)*

Module 2: Spatial Design & Visualization

- Week 4: SketchUp & 3D Modeling Review.
    - *Project 2 Launch: Themed Maze Design.*
    - *Guest Speaker: Tyler Scrivner*
- Week 5: Twinmotion Workshop. Real-time rendering workflows for client presentations.
- Week 6: Lighting & Sound Integration for Immersive Environments.
    - *Guest Speaker: Garrett Gagnon / Eb Madry*

Module 3: Character & Brand Integration

- Week 7: Character & Costume Design in Commercial Spaces.
    - *Adobe Photoshop Rendering Workshop.*
- Week 8 (Midterm): Project 3: Mascot Design & Branding.
    - *Midterm Critiques.*

Module 4: Large Scale Environments

- Week 9: Project 4: Basketball Arena Remodel. Understanding scale, crowd flow, and sightlines.
- Week 10: Critique & Feedback on Arena Concepts.

Module 5: The Capstone Collaboration (Themed Restaurant)

- Week 12: Project Launch: Concept & Menu Narrative.
- Week 13: Pitch 1: Initial Design & Scope. (Simulated Client Meeting).

- Week 14: Design Development (Drafting & 3D Modeling).
- Week 15: Pitch 2: Preliminary Design Review.
- Week 16: Final Design Presentation. Full design deck, renders, and walkthroughs.

THA 211: 3D Modeling and Rendering (Vectorworks)

Instructor: Brandon PT Davis
Email: bdavis@stephens.edu
Phone:573.881.0430
Office Hours: [By Appointment]

Course Description This course serves as an advanced introduction to Computer-Aided Drafting (CAD) and 3D visualization for theatrical design. Moving beyond basic drafting, students will master the workflow of Vectorworks 2024, focusing on 3D modeling, hybrid symbol creation, texturing, lighting, and the generation of industry-standard construction documents (Ground Plans, Sections, and Elevations) directly from the 3D model.

Course Objectives By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Master the 3D Workflow: Create complex scenic environments using solid modeling and hybrid objects in Vectorworks.
2. Visualize Concepts: Utilize Twinmotion to create real-time renders and visualizations for client presentations.
3. Generate Documentation: Produce 2D construction drawings (Plans, Sections, Elevations) derived from 3D geometry.
4. Manage Data: Understand proper file organization, classes, layers, and viewport management for professional collaboration.

Required Software & Hardware

- Vectorworks 2024 (Educational License)
- Twinmotion (Real-Time Rendering)
- 3-Button Mouse (Required for efficient modeling)

Evaluation & Projects

Assignment	Points	Description
Weekly Skill Quizzes	120	10 Technical quizzes covering tools, palettes, and standards.
Assignment 1-3	150	Initial setup, 3D primitive worksheets, and Rendering basics.
Project 1: 3D Object	100	Modeling a complex prop/object to learn solid addition/subtraction.

Assignment	Points	Description
Project 2: Sitcom Set	200	(Midterm) Modeling a multi-camera realistic interior (walls, doors, windows, furniture) to understand architectural tools.
Project 3: Conceptual Research	100	Research and concept development for *Wait Until Dark*.
Project 4: Scenic Model	100	Full 3D Digital Model of the set for *Wait Until Dark*.
Project 5: Visualization	100	Final lit renderings and textures using Renderworks/Twinmotion.
Project 6: Drafting Package	350	(Final) Industry-standard drafting plate including Ground Plan, Front Elevations, and Centerline Section derived from the Project 4 model.
Total	1120	

Export to Sheets

Weekly Schedule

Module 1: The Vectorworks Environment

- Week 1: UI Setup, Workspaces, and Drafting Standards.
- Week 2: Introduction to 3D Tools (Extrude, Sweep, Loft).
- Week 3: Lab: Complex Modeling Techniques & Solids Modeling.

Module 2: Architectural Modeling (The Sitcom Project)

- Week 4: Hybrid Objects (Walls, Doors, Windows).
- Week 5: Resource Manager & Symbol Creation.
- Week 6: Project 2 Due: "My Life" Sitcom Set.
    - *Focus:* Clean geometry and proper layer/class organization.

Module 3: Theatrical Application (Wait Until Dark)

- Week 7: Script Analysis & Research for *Wait Until Dark*.
- Week 8 (Midterm): Twinmotion Integration.
    - *Lab:* Exporting models to Twinmotion for rapid texture and lighting iteration.
- Week 9: Project 4: The Digital Model.
    - *Focus:* Modeling specific theatrical elements (stairs, platforms, masking).

Module 4: Rendering & Documentation

- Week 12: Advanced Texturing & Lighting in Renderworks.
- Week 13: From 3D to 2D: Generating Viewports and Cutting Sections.
- Week 14: Dimensioning & Annotation Standards (USITT).
- Week 15: Project 6: The Drafting Package.
    - *Lab:* Compiling the Ground Plan, Section, and Elevations into a printable PDF binder.
- Week 16: Final Portfolio Review & File Handoff Standards.