

SUMMER | 2025

LAUREN SAUNDERS SET & COSTUME PORTFOLIO

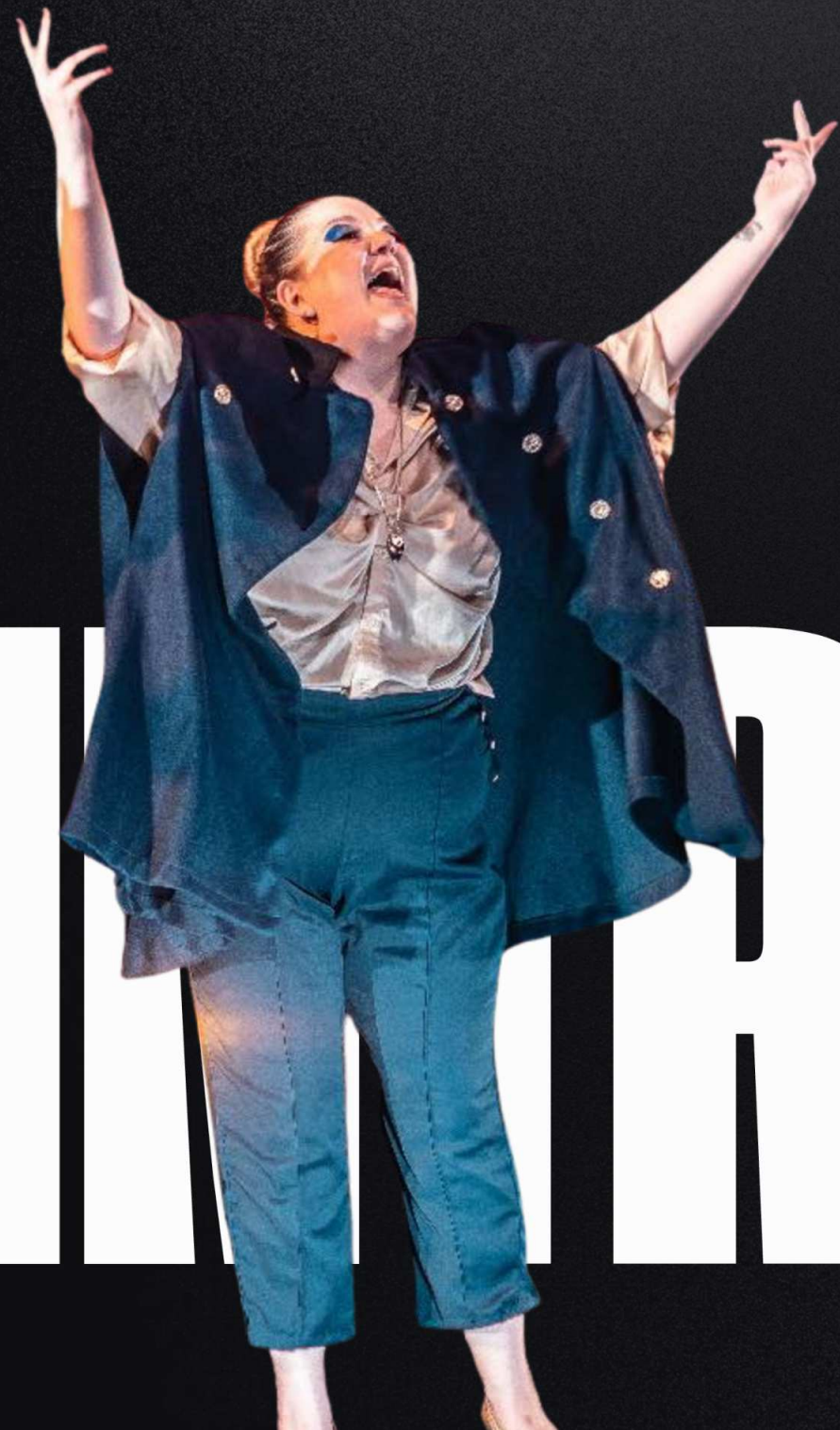
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"I'm a visual artist and (re)emerging theatre designer with a passion for visual storytelling. Having originally specialised in Scenography, my more expansive and professional background in fine art and participatory practice (particularly installation and mixed media) shapes my approach to set and costume design - where I enjoy creating textured, atmospheric worlds rich in meaning and emotional impact.

I'm especially drawn to bold, fantastical, period and gritty narratives - stories that invite layered, symbolic design and emotionally resonant environments. My aesthetic blends the conceptual and practical within the context of the brief, using materials, found objects, and visual metaphor to deepen the audience's connection to the story.

Reengaging with theatre as a performer has profoundly reinvigorated my professional creative practice, and strengthened my understanding of visual storytelling. Returning to full-scale production design with Jesus Christ Superstar, I brought this renewed perspective to the design process, balancing conceptual and contextual richness with hands-on problem-solving, collaboration, and sustainability. I am completely in love with theatre, and I can't wait to keep exploring, designing, and telling stories onstage.

INTRODUCTION



JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

Hull Musical Theatre Company

9-12 July 2025

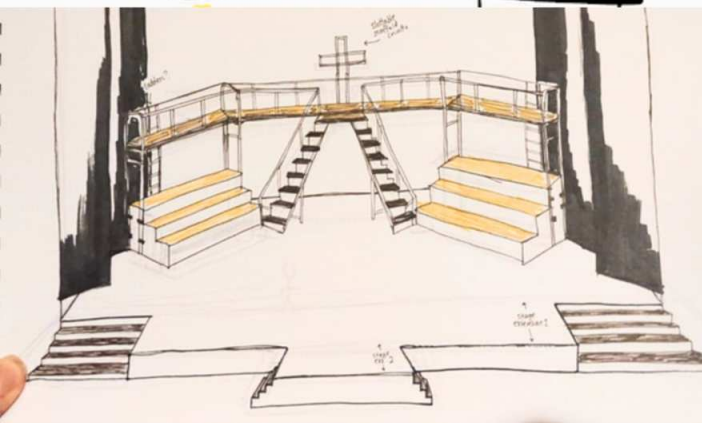
Production Designer (and Pontius Pilate)

Responsible for: Set, Costume, Props, Lighting
Direction and Publicity/Programme Aesthetics.

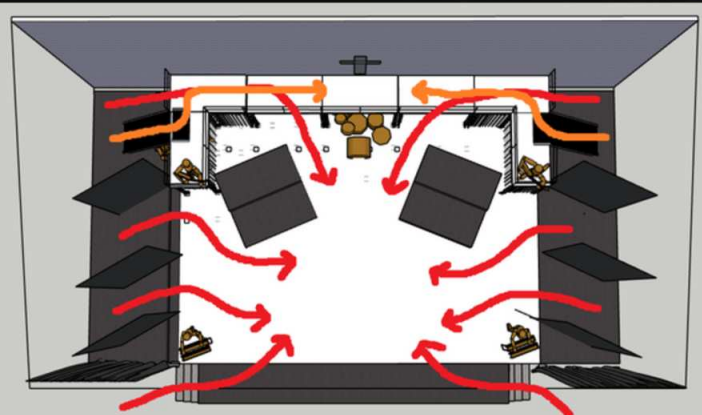
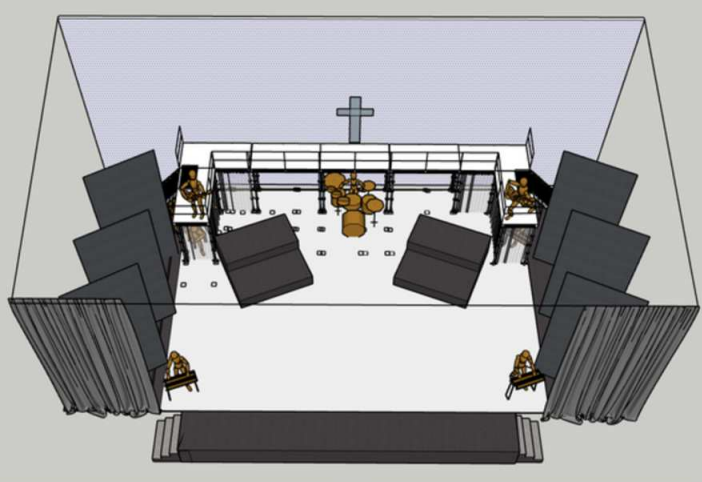
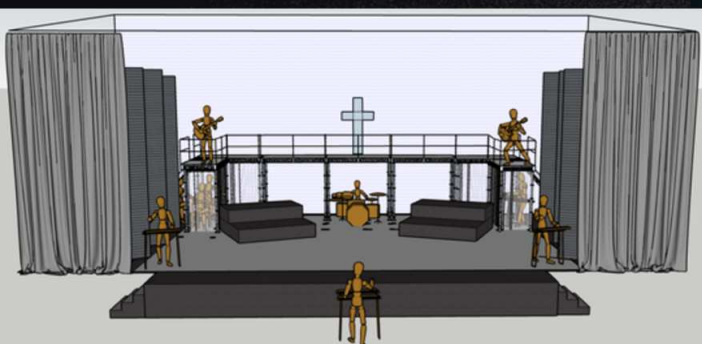
The design concept for Jesus Christ Superstar is raw, timeless, and inspired by both the Arena production and recent tours. A prominent cross atop a bannered balcony anchors the narrative, and a bold colour story helps distinguish characters when lyrics and onstage movement are ambiguous. With a genderbent amateur cast sourcing their own affordable, sustainable costumes and props, clarity of vision was essential to communicate.



Mary in warm pattern to reflect her soothing warmth and maintain distinction within ensemble.. Mary also had wrist scarf to serve as prop and anxiety-management tool



FIRST DESIGNS VS FINAL MOCK UP



Set did not change during the show as to not detract from the performances

2m high balcony/walkway made from scaffolding and standard decks for use of levels. Positioned against wall for stability and safety and to reduce costs.

Always there LED crucifix made from stage rigging - for foreshadowing and lighting drama

Large banners create channels through which cast enter/exit

'DIY' protest banners to emphasize themes of conflict and power of the mob - more get brought on and pinned up by cast during the show. Signs in English, Latin (anti-Roman) and Hebrew (respectfully religious) reflect the period-accurate multi-culture and political frustration of Roman-occupied Judea

Fun visual Easter eggs

Two-tiered platforms for creative use of levels

On stage band as the music is such a central feature of the show, and automatically creates 'rock concert' aesthetics - also better for sound balance. Positioned away/protected from cast exits

Set altered slightly during install to accommodate additional band spacing and cast needs

Kept deceptively 'simple' as the story is raw and deeply emotional - felt important for the set to remain stripped back, unpolished, and gritty. I wanted the set to look almost like a rock concert but I also didn't want to hide the brilliant cast behind empty spectacle

Stage extender/apron to help safely accommodate cast of 45 cast + 9 onstage band + crew

Side step allow cast to navigate into or from the auditorium during certain scenes

ROCK CONCERT + SPEAKERS CORNER

Amplifying raw emotion, fate and truth through gritty materiality

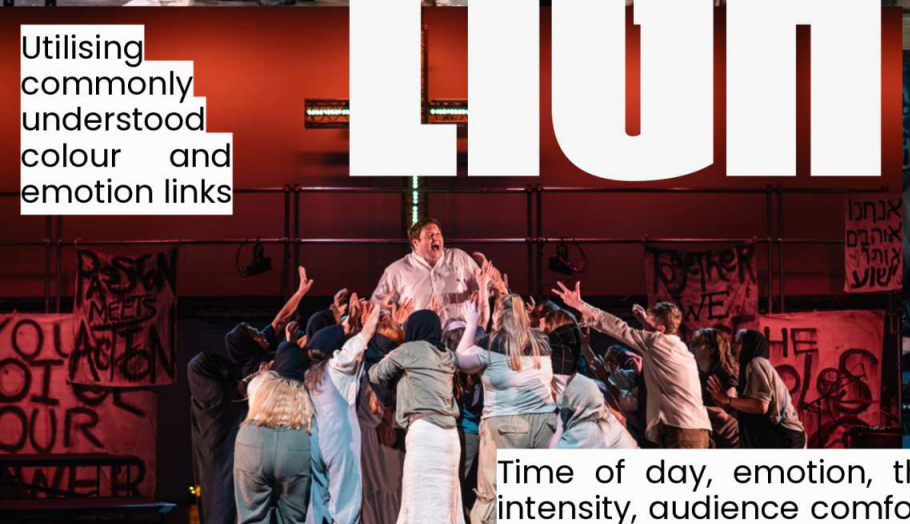
SET



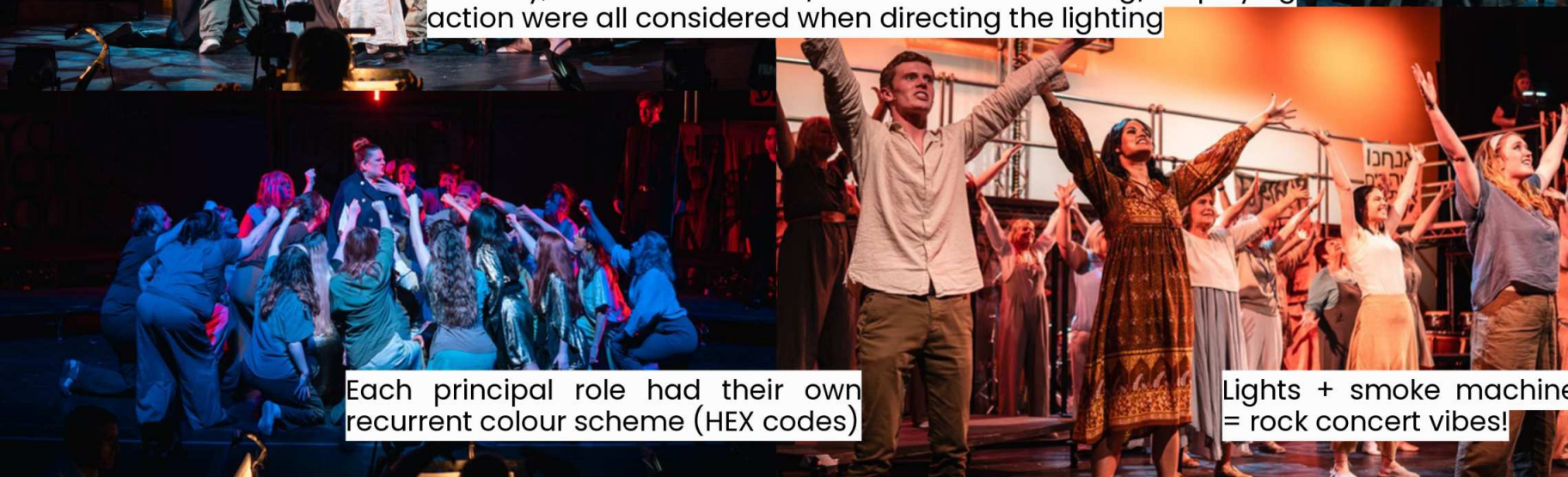
Colour-changing LED crucifix



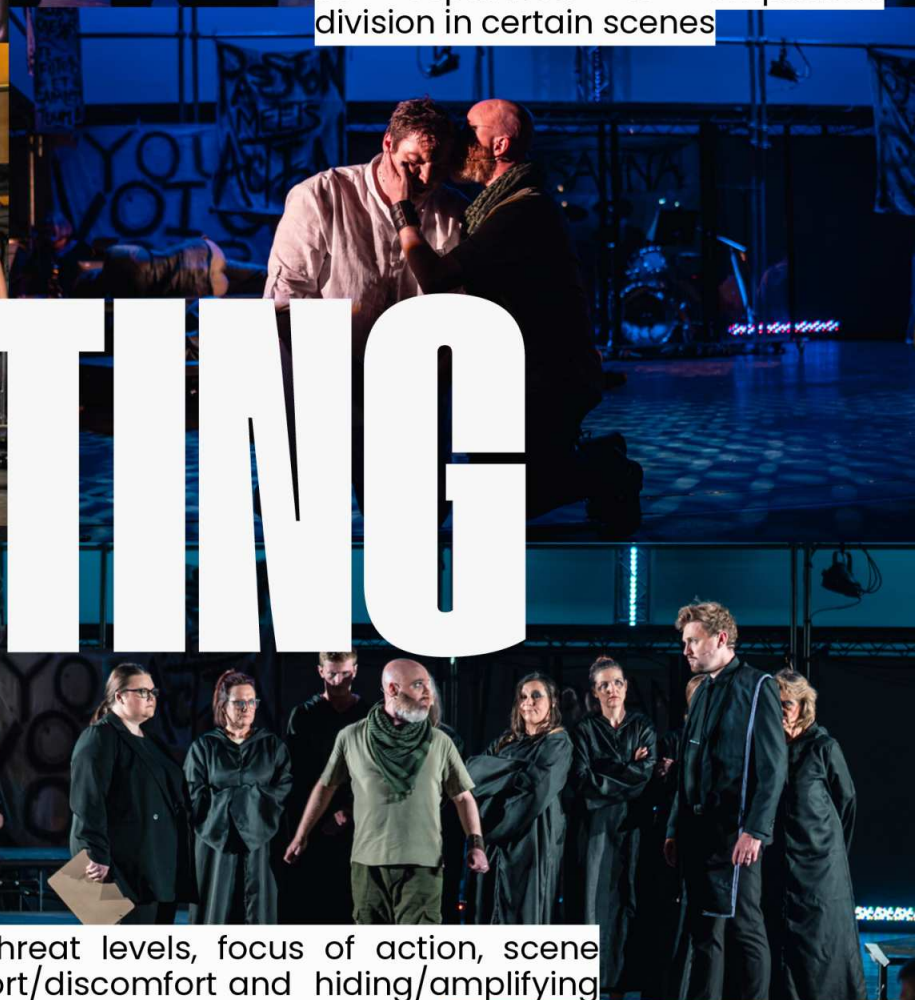
Lighting plot aligned closely with changes in the score



Utilising commonly understood colour and emotion links



Each principal role had their own recurrent colour scheme (HEX codes)



Ground and balcony lighting could be separated to emphasize division in certain scenes



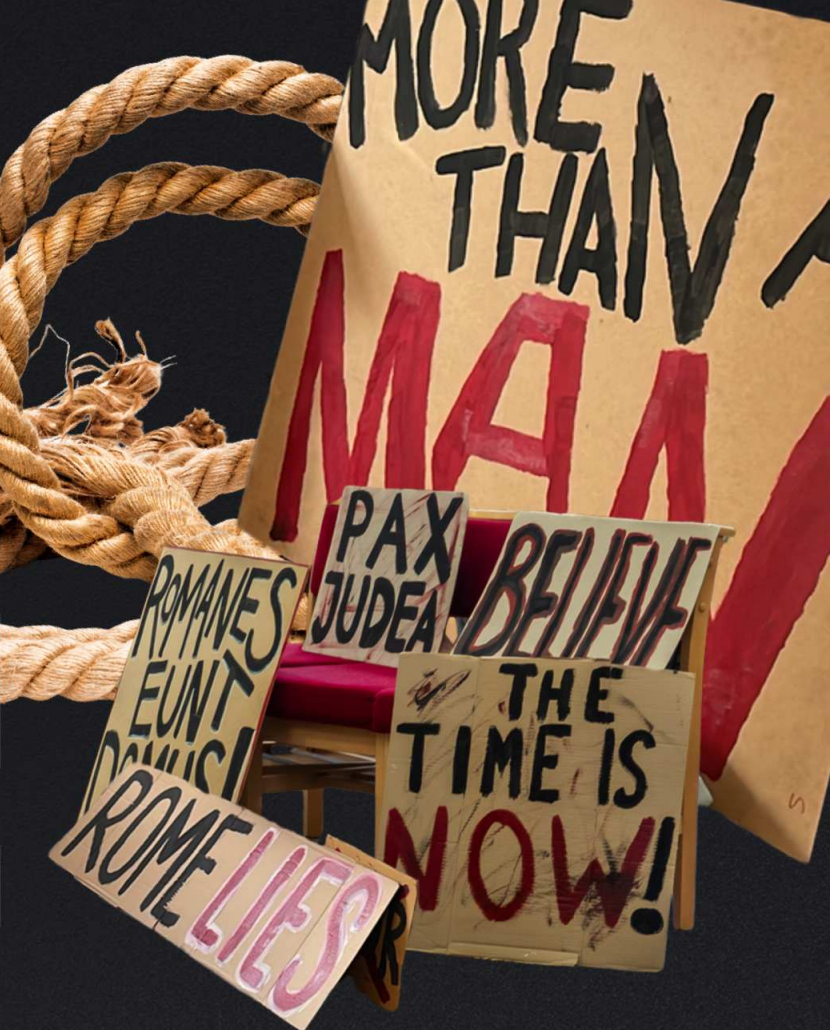
Lights + smoke machine = rock concert vibes!



PROPS

I made a series of props (i.e. crown of thorns, floggers, handheld protest signs, noose) to accompany storytelling using the 'stripped back' aesthetic in organic materials - such as jute, cloth and wood.

Already manufactured props (either sourced by myself or the cast) were carefully selected to match the aesthetic of the rest of the production.



"From the moment you stepped into the performance space, it was clear that Hull Musical Theatre Company had crafted something thoughtful and striking. The set was deceptively simple but highly effective: a balcony spanned the rear of the stage with a lit up cross in the middle, adding depth and drama, while two raised platforms either side created dynamic levels that were well-utilised throughout. It was a strong visual starting point that set the tone for a production that balanced power and poignancy in equal measure.

One of the most refreshing aspects of this staging was the positioning of the band, [who] were placed in different areas of the stage, rather than being confined to a pit or behind the scenes. This decision gave the show a unique and immersive feel, bringing the music to the heart of the action.

Lighting design played a vital role in shaping the mood of the production. Bold colour choices and well-timed shifts complemented the music and narrative beautifully. Whether subtly casting shadows during quieter, more reflective moments or flooding the stage with intensity during high-stakes scenes, the lighting was always impactful and intelligent in its use.

REVIEW

Costumes were also well-conceived, offering a modern interpretation that still paid homage to the biblical context of the story. The decision to bring contemporary styling into the mix worked very well, helping to ground the themes of betrayal, power, faith, and resistance in a more immediate and relatable world."

WILD DIALOGUE

Mixed Media Installation

Exhibited Uni of Hull 16 May – 29 June 2025

'Unfolded': Feral ReWilders Exhibition

Wild Dialogue is an immersive installation developed in response to the challenges of encouraging nature kinship within local communities. Recognising that connection must precede kinship, the design addresses cultural barriers – such as fear of the outdoors, lack of knowledge, and self-consciousness around spirituality. Using theatrical storytelling, archetypal characters, original Lore, and participatory performance, this piece creates a playful, low-pressure gateway to re-engaging with place, nature, and British indigenous perspectives on Land connection. Designed to evoke wonder and curiosity, the set and costume elements (made entirely from sustainable materials) blend the mythic and the accessible, inviting audiences to suspend disbelief and explore nature through a magical, inclusive lens.



Site - specificity: Top ten most abundant/thriving plants identified at Pickering Road Community Orchard



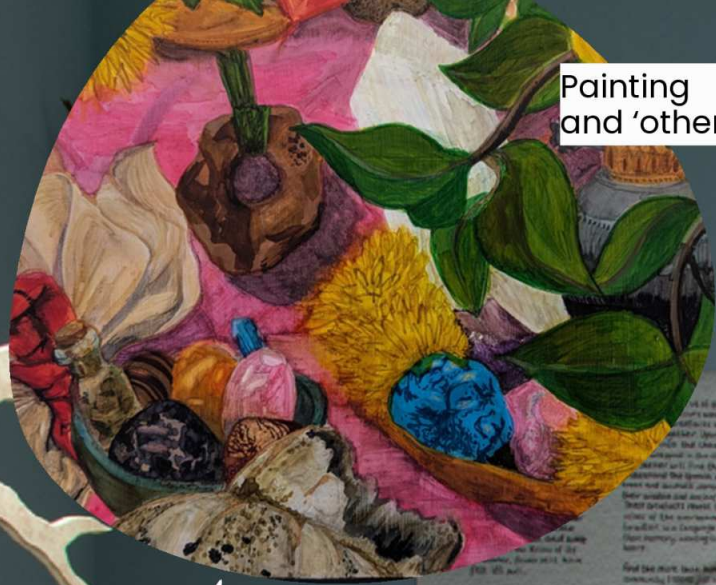
elements



MAKIN MAGIC

ANGLO-IRISH FOLK
SYMBOLISM + PLAYFUL
NATURE KINSHIP +
ECOMATERIALS +
PARTICIPATORY
STORYTELLING =

CLIMATE-FOCUSED
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE



Painting about 'wisdom' and 'otherly' knowledge



Wearable and 'magical' momigami cloak that enables wearer to hear the more-than-human

Enchanted suspended jute cube that enables those contained within it to be heard by the more-than-human

Short folkloric story to contextualize the work

Magical wooden staff (made and used in a previous production)

Articulated hand puppet made from willow (which I made and used within a previous theatre production)



Interactive storytelling - ceramic cubes that have the ability to hold positive intentions and climate wishes

Borrowed set pieces from HMTC to illustrate its designed outdoor use

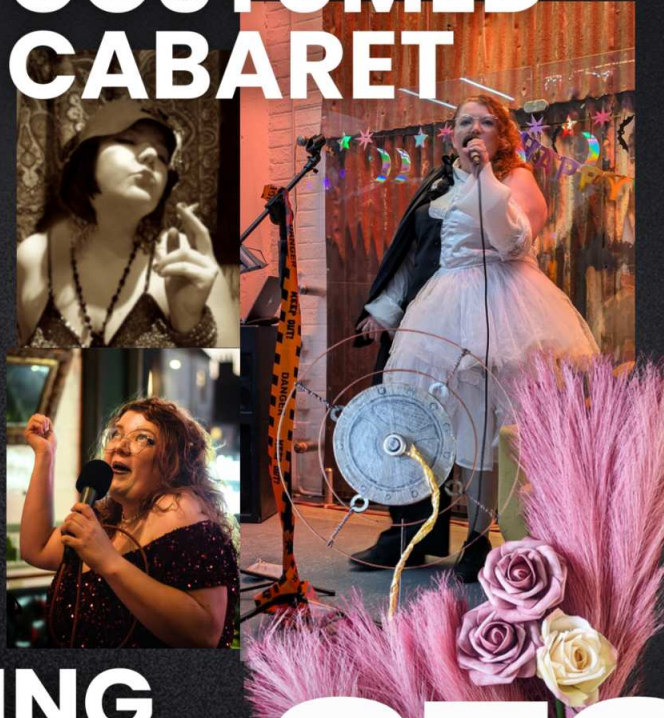


Four ceramic elemental 'ritual' tools, positioned to face it's symbolic direction



Interactive storytelling - audiences imbue ceramic cubes with positive intentions for nature and throw into the installation to 'charge' the cloak

**COSTUMED
CABARET**



SH*T BEACH ACTION



**1960'S
WAREHOUSE
INSTALLATION**



**UKRAINIAN
COMMUNITY
INSTALLATION**



STORIES



SPACES OF INTENT

For the past decade, my broad and eco-sensitive creative practice has focused on bold visual and contextual storytelling, often developed collaboratively with communities across various contexts.

**NATURE MAGIC
COMMUNITY INSTALLATION**



TITANIA

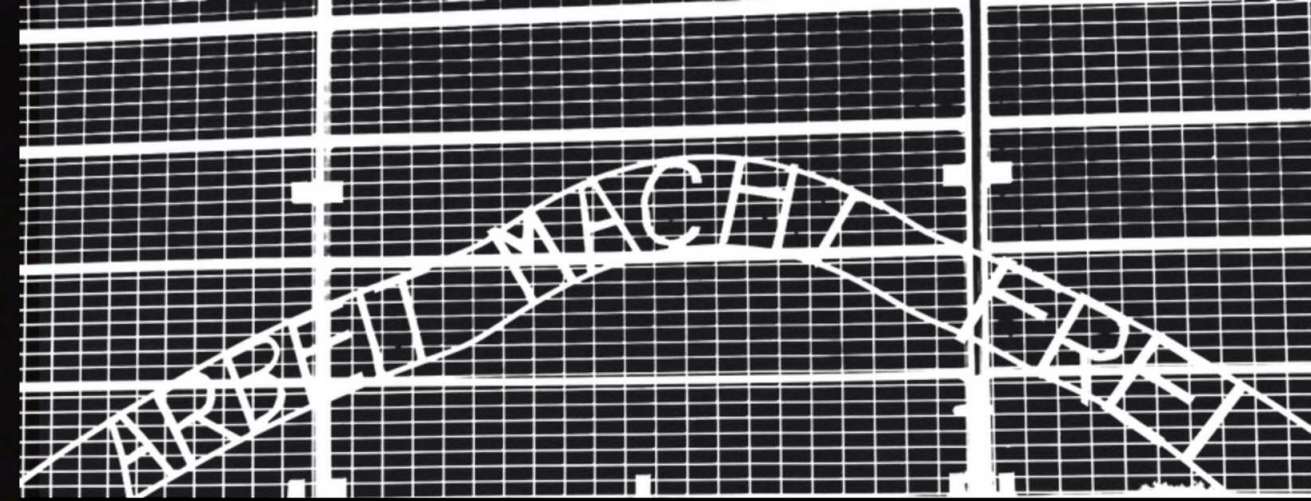
Moon Fool

2012-15

Set/Costume Designer



These two historic projects reflect my semi-independent specialisation in scenography during my Creative Arts foundation degree studies.



DER

BA Drama (Mdx)

2012

Set/Costume Designer

MISCHLINGER





CV SNAPSHOT

Recent Highlights

- 2025 – Jesus Christ Superstar (Production Designer)
 - Wild Dialogue (Art Installation)
- 2024 – Re:View (Art Installation)
 - Sh*t Beach (Production Designer)
 - The Ukrainian Front Room (Art Installation)
 - Into the Woods (Puppet-making and set/costume sourcing)
- 2023 – Where the Beings Art (Art Installation)

Scheduled Projects

- 2025 – Various Cabarets (Costume)
- 2026 – The Great British Bake Off Musical (Production Designer)
 - We Will Rock You (Production Designer)

Formal Education

- 2023 – MA Creative Practice – *High Class Distinction*
- 2018 – BA (Hons) Fine Art – *First*
- 2012 – FdD Creative Arts (Scenography) – *Merit*
- 2019 – FdDip Art & Design (3D Craft) – *Merit*

Hard Skills

- Drawing and model-making
- Digital design tools (e.g. SketchUp, Photoshop)
- Extensive practical construction and sustainable making skills, including sewing, carpentry, sign-making, and fabric manipulation
- Strong script and text analysis to inform design choices
- Knowledge of costume history, and awareness of historical, contemporary, and socio-political design movements
- Fabric and material awareness
- Research and sourcing skills
- Effective budget and time management
- Understanding of lighting and actor requirements, and how these affect both set and costume design
- Health and safety awareness
- In-depth knowledge of theatre production processes
- Confident use of mood boards, swatching, and sample presentation tools

Soft Skills

- Drawing and model-making
- Creative vision and visual storytelling
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Deep understanding of character and narrative
- Clear communication and collaborative working, including community co-creation
- Adaptability and flexibility under pressure
- Strong attention to detail
- Empathy and emotional intelligence
- Cultural sensitivity and inclusive design awareness
- Self-motivation and initiative



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