

# Tips & Tricks

Setting up your Design & Production college  
application portfolio



## ❖ Big Picture Considerations

- ❖ Keep it clear & simple
- ❖ Show Process!
- ❖ Showcase your work in your “voice”
- ❖ A portfolio is not a scrapbook
- ❖ Reviewers should know who you are in your absence
- ❖ Be clear about what you actually did / worked on
- ❖ Show Process!
- ❖ Lead & finish with your strongest work
- ❖ Avoid redundancies
- ❖ Show Process!
- ❖ Test your file on different devices

# ❖ Keep it clear & simple

## *Quick graphic design tips*

- ❖ Be consistent- train the viewer's eye to know where to look
- ❖ Pick ONE font and use it throughout
- ❖ Be consistent with how you use *italics*, larger fonts, bold, CAPS, etc...
- ❖ Use a tight color scheme
- ❖ Pay attention to alignment, justification & centers

Excellent overview of practical  
[graphic design tips from Canva](#)

With drop shadow

Good overview of [color theory](#)

Without drop shadow

Sometimes a drop shadow can help by providing dimension to the page and guide the viewer's eye

## ❖ Keep it clear & simple

### *Quick graphic design tips (con't)*

- ❖ Avoid “one-sided” pages at the expense of images that are too small
- ❖ Avoid clutter- let images breathe on the page
- ❖ Use the same design elements throughout whole portfolio
- ❖ Contrast = Interest & legibility

### *Label, label, label!*

- ❖ Credit collaborators, indicate what you worked on
- ❖ State show titles, project or assignment title
- ❖ Include a date
- ❖ For production photos include Act & Scene #, scene name, or song title
- ❖ Succinctly describe what you're showing

## ❖ Let your “voice” shine

*Tell a visual story of how you've improved:  
what you've learned, what you would do differently next time.  
What surprised you about your process?*

- ❖ Lead with your strongest work & finish with a bang
- ❖ A few bullet points can go far to add context to your experiences along with well placed labels
- ❖ Theater is a team sport- give credit where credit is due to others, but feature your contribution
- ❖ The focus is on your WORK, not fancy formatting.
- ❖ That said, it's ok to have some style!



...And show your growth!

# ❖ Introduce Yourself!

*Create a homepage, title slide or page*

- ❖ Include your name prominently
- ❖ Give yourself a “job title”
  - Theatre Artist
  - Stage Manager
  - Theatre Technician
  - Lighting Designer, etc...
- ❖ Depending on format, include a one sentence bio, or state goals
- ❖ Consider one image that shows you or your experience or talents
- ❖ Everyone comes in with different levels and kinds of experiences; tell us about YOURS!





# Edith Head

## Costume Designer

Edith Head is an LA based award winning Hollywood costume designer. (who died in 1981)

Contact: [EdithHead@xxx.com](mailto:EdithHead@xxx.com)  
(000) 123-4567



# ❖ Show Your Process!

## Stage Managers:

- ❖ Show samples of calling scripts, blocking notes & paperwork
  - Demonstrate your organization and communication style & skills
  - Remove any person contact information about other individuals
  - Double check scan quality of paperwork
- ❖ Make a video calling a complex cuing sequence
  - Keep it under 2 mins and manage your file formats or make sure permissions on YouTube or Vimeo are open

Good web-based example of paperwork:

<https://www.patrickleejohnson.com/paperwork>

Helpful video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYWV3KfkJPo>

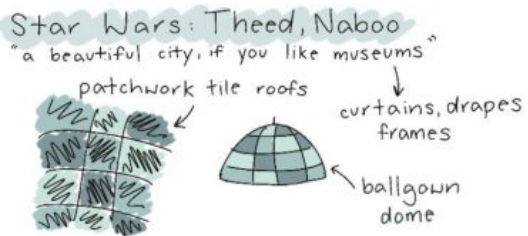
Esp timestamp 1:30 & 3:00

In person college  
interview?

Bring 1-2 full prompt books



# ❖ Show Your Process!



silk organza



## Designers:

- ❖ Research images
  - why this image?
  - where was it sourced?
- ❖ Rough sketches
- ❖ Finished drawings, model work
- ❖ Final looks on stage

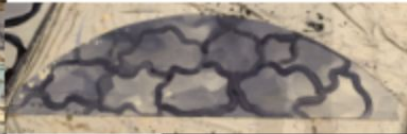
# ❖ Show Your Process!

## Artisans & Technicians:

- ❖ Include research & sketches
- ❖ Include images of works in progress
- ❖ What did you paint or build?
- ❖ How did it look onstage under lights?
- ❖ Run crew position? Document your responsibilities.
- ❖ Show paperwork



Sister Act Jr. (Arches)

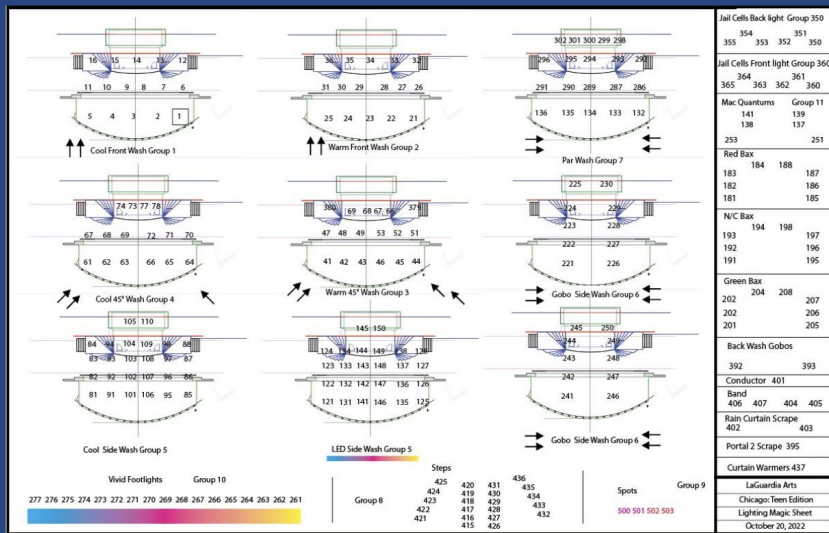


Sister Act was my most comprehensive scenic project. I was hired to design a full set for Whitefish Bay Middle School's production of Sister Act

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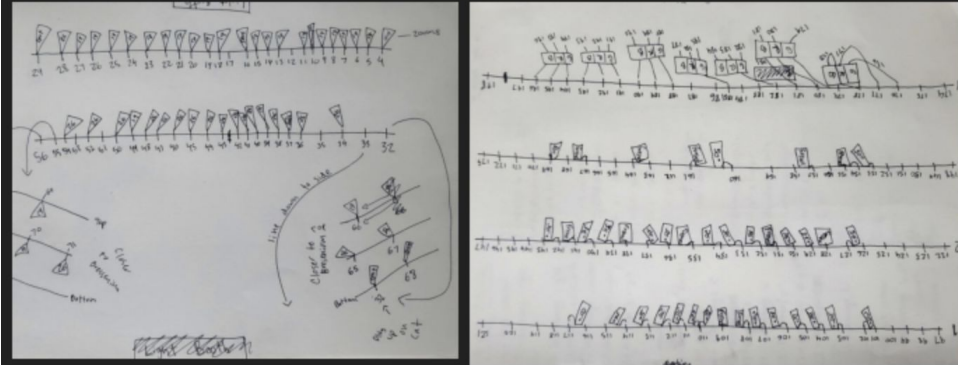
# ❖ Show YOUR Process!



This is a magic sheet I made as Asst. LD on Chicago: Teen Edition. After I channeled the plot, I used the positioning & purpose to create a magic sheet so both the designer & I knew what lights to focus where, when we were focusing on stage. As someone who learns visually, I created individual groupings to allow me to accurately name & focus each fixture.

## Light Plots

- I created lighting plots for organization and design purposes. Going through every light in the auditorium and recording the degree and sub number for every light.



*Remember:* Applicants have access to a diverse range of production values at their high schools. Both creators of these lighting paperwork examples were admitted to the program.



# ❖ Show Your Process!

## Faux Brick

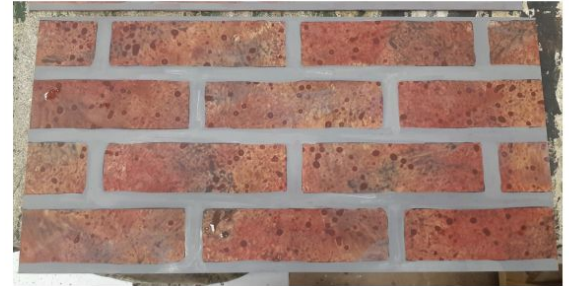
2022

Made at the MPulse Theater Camp Scenic Painting Class

Paint on a Eucaboard

12" x 24"

What's missing?  
RESEARCH! Include any  
reference images that  
you used.

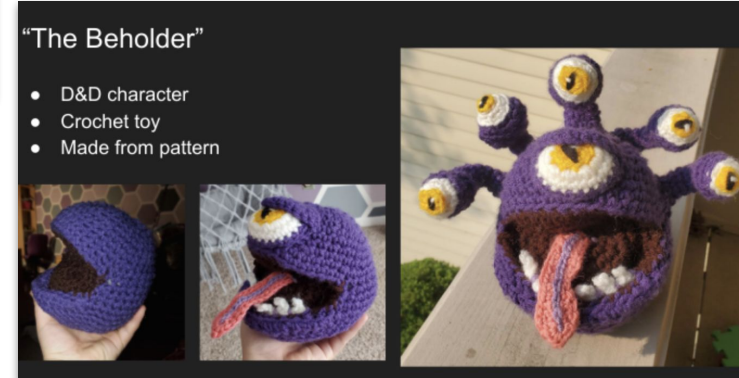
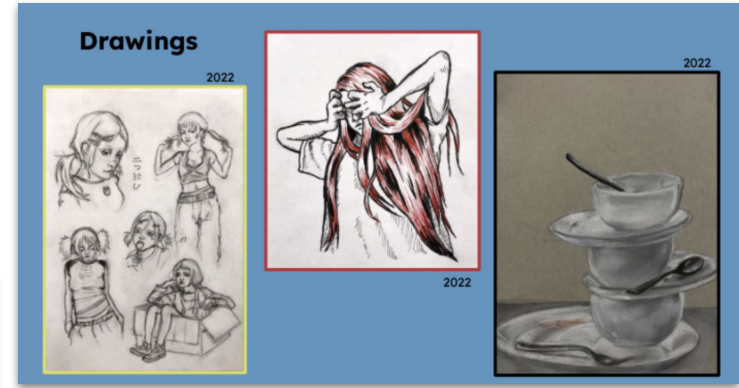
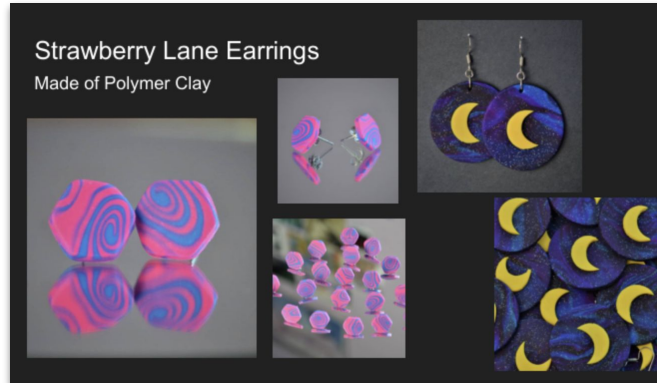


# ❖ What Else?

What demonstrates your creative self outside of theatre? We also love to see any of the following:

- ❖ Photography
- ❖ Doodles
- ❖ Zines
- ❖ Jewelry
- ❖ Clay work
- ❖ Crafting
- ❖ Graphic Design

➤ We are interested in seeing show programs that you've designed, but we don't need to see programs as proof for your theatre work



# Digital Portfolio

Most colleges now require some kind of digital portfolio as part of the application process  
(even if the interview is in person)



### *What should I use to organize all my stuff?*

#### ❖ Canva

- <https://www.canva.com/>
- Good template options in free version
- Download presentation as pdf or as individual jpgs

#### ❖ Google Slides

- <https://docs.google.com/presentation>
- Use Themes and Layout to help with graphic design
- Download presentation as pdf or as individual jpgs

(Also there's too much text on this page,  
but this doc is *not* a portfolio...)

#### ❖ Adobe Portfolio

- <https://portfolio.adobe.com/start>
- Website portfolio, free w/ Adobe subscription
- Ability to create pages or photo galleries

#### ❖ Individual Files

- Follow the application instructions-what's allowed?
- Allows for different media
- Use available text boxes to add context

#### ❖ Websites like Wix or Squarespace

- Use the free version!

# ❖ Digital Portfolio

- ❖ Don't settle for a template out of the box! Change *something* as a nod to your personal style.
  - (really...we've seen all the google slide templates)
- ❖ Test different file formats on different devices
- ❖ Pick a file size that allows for clarity and a good resolution, but doesn't look crazy big on screens that requires scrolling to see the whole image

*Remember:* Students enter our program with *many* different experience levels. So, submit what *you* have!



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**STYLE can speak volumes!**  
The same content is on these 3 slides,  
but uses very different styles!



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Ms. Head is an LA based award winning Hollywood costume designer.

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# EDITH HEAD

## COSTUME DESIGNER

EDITH IS AN LA BASED AWARD WINNING  
HOLLYWOOD COSTUME DESIGNER.

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# Physical Portfolio & the in person interview



## ❖ What to Bring

*Remember, YOU are being interviewed, not your work*

- ❖ Be prepared to answer the question, “What would you do next time?”
- ❖ Bring items that do not translate well to a 2D digital portfolio or short video
  - Prompt scripts with your annotations, blocking notes, etc...
  - Sketchbook full of doodles and observational drawings
  - Jewelry you’ve made or clothes you’ve constructed
  - Small hand props you’ve made
- ❖ Bring any new work since you completed your application that shows additional skills
- ❖ Depending on the program, you may need to bring a device to show your digital portfolio
- ❖ Double check the expectations for each specific application / interview
  - For Michigan, you do not need to bring a bound “traditional” portfolio

# PS: Document & Show Your Process!

Good luck!

