Memories: The Lighting Design for “The Glass Menagerie”

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Memories:
The Lighting Design for “The Glass Menagerie”

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

by

Catherine Blencowe
Sam Houston State University
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre, 2016

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This thesis is approved for the recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract

This thesis presents new ways of looking at an old classic by illuminating the emotions and hardship of the Wingfield family through the use of color and texture. *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams was presented at the University of Arkansas in September of 2017. The challenges of this production will be addressed as well as the achievements and areas of improvement of this production. Finally, this document will answer the question: How does color, texture, and the angle of stage lighting help heighten the emotions of the characters and engage an audience in the play?

Included are all the documents critical for the lighting design process including, but not limited to: light plot, magic sheet, cue sheets, and research images. Production photographs are included and referenced throughout the paper to help further illustrate the design approach.
Acknowledgements

Throughout my life, I have always had people that stood behind me pushing me forward from teachers to accomplished mentors. First and foremost, I want to thank my family who have supported me in all my endeavors. They would drive me to and from rehearsals at the community theatre and put up with those crazy hours. Mom and Dad, you have been an inspiration to me and how I learned by tenacity and work ethic. I am beyond thankful to be your daughter. Lisa Martin who introduced me to my love of the technical side of theatre.

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Way and Fun Home at TheatreSquared as well as The Diary of Anne Frank and Life is a Dream.

Watching you design was some of the most inspiring moments I have had in graduate school.

You are an inspiration to all the students you come into contact with, and I hope one day that I have the same effect on the students and young minds that I teach.
Dedication

*Memories: The Lighting Design for “The Glass Menagerie”* is dedicated to Lisa Miller.

This extraordinary woman showed me what it meant to be a lighting designer from such a young age. She took me under her wing back in 2008. I know for a fact I would not be doing what I am today if it wasn’t for her. She has always had my back, been a shoulder to cry on and an ear to listen when I am having a hard time, and I know a simple dedication isn’t enough to show how thankful I am to her for all she has done.
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I. Introduction

In September of 2017, The University of Arkansas produced *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams in the Fine Arts Center University Theatre. This thesis is about the journey I took in creating the lighting design that helped ground the characters in the jewel box world that Michael Riha, the set designer, created.

In this document, I will walk through my process starting with my analysis of the play; what it meant to me and how I was able to grasp on to elements that Cole Wimpee, the director, wanted to create for the show. Next, I will detail design meetings and how they shaped my ideas and how they grew from those meetings. Then I will discuss my approach to the actual design of the show and explain how I developed my design. I will also discuss how I took the general and detailed concepts from the meetings and turned them into a design for the stage. Finally, I will reflect on the entire process and what I learned that will aid me in my future design work.

This production has made me grow as an artist and a collaborator because of the challenges I overcame in the design meetings as well as in the room during tech. The following pages will serve to document this journey.
II. The Play

*The Glass Menagerie*, written by Tennessee Williams, is an exploration of a family and how the ideals of what constitutes a “proper family” fluctuates within a society. The Wingfields live in St. Louis, Missouri in an apartment shared by the whole family, which was normal around 1937 with a middle-class family who has no “father figure” in the picture.

*The Glass Menagerie* is a play which comes from the memories of Tom Wingfield, the narrator as well as a character in the play. The play is set in 1937 in St. Louis where Tom is an aspiring writer who works in a shoe warehouse to support his mother, Amanda, and his sister, Laura. Tom and Laura’s father, Mr. Wingfield, is no longer in the picture after he ran off many years prior and during all that time the only time the family heard from him was through one postcard. Amanda, a genuine southern belle, is constantly reliving the highlights of her youth with tales of gentleman callers for Laura. She is disappointed that Laura hasn’t had any gentleman callers because Amanda wants her to be a wife and a mother. Amanda believes that any woman who is not married has failed. More to that point, Amanda believes that socially if her daughter becomes an old maid, Amanda would be excluded from her so-called friends. Laura is extremely shy. She wears a brace on her leg due to a physical deformity. Laura believes that this deformity is the reason why she has no gentleman callers, but Amanda refuses to see Laura with such a physical problem. Prior to the play, Amanda has enrolled Laura in typing school, which she ended up abandoning after the first day, but she would continue to tell her mother that she was attending. Instead of typing classes, Laura was wandering around the town finding herself at the Jewel Box greenhouse in the park. Young Tom is tired and annoyed that he is working a dead-end job during the day and then must come home to the constant nagging of his mother at night. He finds an escape in the movies, literature, and liquor. One of the many fights with Amanda leads to Tom throwing his coat across the room and hitting Laura’s most
prized possessions, her collection of glass figurines. One night on the fire escape, Amanda and Tom have the only calm and human conversation we see in the show. Amanda requests that Tom keep an eye out for suitors for Laura during their conversation about how Laura is going to survive in the world. Tom selects Jim O’Connor who is Tom’s only friend at work. The night that Jim comes to dinner is one that the family won’t forget. Amanda goes out of her way to find Laura a brand-new dress and prepares an elaborate meal. When Laura finds out who is coming to dinner, she worries herself sick. As it turns out, in high school Laura had a crush on Jim. Being very popular, Jim was oblivious to shy Laura and this became such a dark spot for her that she eventually dropped out of high school. When Jim arrives, Amanda tells Laura to answer the door and then leaves the room. At the same time Jim and Tom are left on the fire escape. Tom tells Jim that he used the money for his family’s electric bill to join the merchant marines and plans to leave everything behind in search of adventure. After Laura lets the men inside, she leaves the room and doesn’t eat with the family. Amanda grills Jim about his past and future during the meal. As dinner is coming to a close, Tom’s choices catch up to him; the power goes out. Laura and Jim end up sitting by the couch in candlelight where Laura eventually opens up to him about the crush she had in high school and reminds him of the nickname he gave her, “blue roses”. They end up dancing and bump the table with Laura’s glass unicorn on it which falls, and the horn breaks off. Jim ends up kissing her after she explains that it is fine, noting that the unicorn is now just an ordinary horse. He draws back quickly and tells her that he must leave and visit his fiancée. Laura ends up giving him the broken unicorn as a reminder. Amanda comes back into the room and Jim explains the situation and Amanda shows him out. After Jim is gone, Amanda turns on Tom and claims he knew about Jim’s engagement and brought him to the house to hurt his family and he is selfish and a dreamer. Young Tom ends up leaving after this exchange of
words, but stops on the fire escape where he transforms back into the narrator of the play. He explains to us that not long after Jim’s visit, he is fired from work and leaves the two women. Through the years and his travels, he finds he is unable to overcome his guilt because of his memories of Laura.

*The Glass Menagerie* uses the notion of space in a different way than we normally define it. When most people think of space they think of the literal definition: the universe or a physical area. Williams uses another version of this word; what is happening around the body and how it affects what we do. This play explores space as an idea created by the mind through memories. With this in mind, there are three types of space: real-measured which is the physical location like a house with a street address. Measured-real which is like augmented reality where technology makes an impact on how we see something in our daily lives. The third is virtual-real which is like a website about a country or a 3-D model of a landmark, but also a video projected on a wall because the virtual subject is interacting with the real surface. Two of the three types of space are embodied within this story. The real-measured location of the play is the small apartment in St. Louis that the family shares. Secondly, virtual-real is integrated into the show through projections or supertitles. Williams is considered a pioneer when it comes to the convention of projections. His stage directions for the play included instructions for projections such as: “Legend on screen: ‘Ou sont les neiges.’” (Williams 2015) and many other super titles. In the script prior to the text of the play, Williams included words of advice and explains choices that were made for the Broadway performance for each of the design departments.

“The SCREEN DEVICE: … The purpose of this will probably be apparent. It is to give accent to certain values in each scene. Each scene contains a particular point (or several) which is structurally the most important. In an episodic play, such as this, the basic structure or narrative line may be obscured from the audience; the effect may seem fragmentary rather than architectural. This may not be the fault of the play so much as a lack of attention in the audience. The legend
or image upon the screen will strengthen the effect of what is merely allusion in
the writing and allow the primary point to be made more simply and lightly than
if the entire responsibility were on the spoken lines. Aside from this structural
value, I think the screen will have a definite emotional appeal, less definable but
just as important. An imaginative producer or director may invent many other
uses for this device than those indicated in the present script. In fact, the
possibilities of the device seem much larger to me than the instance of this play
can possibly utilize.” (Williams 2015)

To Williams, the screen devices or projections were supposed to be a way for the audiences to
understand the segments of the scenes that he believed carried the weight of the show. By using a
phrase from the scene itself or the overarching message behind each scene, he was setting up the
audience to understand something that would carry them into the next scene. Theatre today is
shifting away from using words or phrases as a supertitle and moving towards images that evoke
the same phrase in the hope of allowing the audience to find an emotional connection to what is
happening and not pulling them away from the story the actors are telling. This shift is helping to
create a bond between the audience and the action on the stage that is allowing the audience to be
more invested in what is happening in front of their eyes. They are being allowed to fill in the
gaps and make connections that help them understand and process their understanding of the
nuances of the play.

The real challenge with this play is how to show the present and the past on the stage
because Tom often flips back and forth between the present-day (1960s) and his memory
(1930s). Williams begins by having the present-day Tom address the audience, he gives
information about the era and what is happening in the world during the 60s.

“To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties,
when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the
blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were
having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a
dissolving economy.
In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion. In
Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labor, sometimes
pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis. This is the social background of the play.” (Williams 2015)

This background allows us to understand the social background of what is happening around this family. By having Old Tom, as I began to refer to the 60s Tom, narrating the story, we are able to see deeper into his early life. Young Tom allows the audience to see the struggle that most men of the 1930s were dealing with during the Great Depression. They found themselves restless and that is apparent in Tom. Although we can’t be sure that Tom went to war, Williams never specified Tom’s background. We do know that Tom has to be the bread winner for his family.

With the creation of The Glass Menagerie, Williams created a new genre of theater, the memory play. This new genre is a play in which a lead character narrates the events, which are drawn from the character's memory. In this particular play, we are presented with Tom’s memories and his feelings about what happened leading him to where he was in “reality”. Tennessee Williams set the play in the memory of Tom and within the first few pages of the play Tom dictates exactly how he remembers the small cramped apartment. His words help illuminate the mood and tone Tom has towards his memories of his family at this time and inform the design.

While time is never really discussed in The Glass Menagerie, it can be inferred that it is viewed on a timeline. Although it happens in two very different time periods: the present (or 1960s in our version) and the memory world of the 1930s. Both timelines are always moving forward. Tom remembers the era in the 1930s in a very cold way, and the 1930s Tom does not see a way out of his harsh household. These two eras allow for it to be considered two different world and the tone Tom has to those memories of the eras help inform the color choices of the design.
The Glass Menagerie has many themes but only a few helped shape the design. The first is the difficulty of accepting reality which all the characters exhibit. The second theme centers on the impossibility of escape for a few of the characters. Tom doesn’t want to accept that he is turning into his father and wants an escape. This ends up being the cause of the memory play for Old Tom. He has run away from the family but can’t escape the memories of them and what he has done. He finds himself wandering around thinking about where they are and what they could be doing. Amanda doesn’t accept that Laura has a physical deformity and she is driving her family apart. She also doesn’t want to accept her husband has left; this leads to her grand delusions of her gentleman callers and keeps her trapped in her past. Laura is the most accepting of the family, but she refuses to accept that her father isn’t coming back, and that she is strong enough to stand up for herself. This leads her to not be able to separate reality from her imagination. Jim also doesn’t want to accept that through his childish actions in high school he hurt Laura. This theme also shows up in Jim’s life when he is in the moment with Laura and they kiss as much as he wants to stay, he has to meet reality and realize that he is engaged.

Each one of the characters are stuck between two different transitions in their own lives. Old Tom is stuck between his past decisions and his current guilt. Young Tom is between staying with or leaving his family. Laura is stuck between wanting to please her mother and being happy. Jim, the gentleman caller, is stuck between his life and his fantasy of Laura. Finally, Amanda is stuck between her southern belle standards and the reality of her situation.
III. The Process

A. Design Meetings

Cole Wimpee, the director, in the first meeting with his design team usually shares musical selections that he feels evokes the emotional response he is looking for from a show. He has us close our eyes as we listen to the music and asks us questions allowing our imaginations to create an emotional response to the songs. For *The Glass Menagerie* he chose selections from Philip Glass and Carl Orff. These particular songs were important for us to hear because Cole believed the fragile nature of these pieces would help us get into the world of the play. The songs he played had an ethereal nature as well as a lightness that followed the nature of the show.

Cole posed three themes from his reading of the script to the design team. The first was: what is one’s obligation to one’s self verses obligations to the ones you love? He asked, “what happens if you choose yourself over others and vice versa?” The second theme was guilt verses self-forgiveness. Finally, the last theme he wanted to explore was “how are we as humans clinging to illusions?” One of the few things that Cole stressed was that he wanted to explore the cinematic quality of the text by bringing back projections into the piece, but in a subtle way. Cole was drawn to the nature that the movies engulfed Tom throughout the play. One of the explorations we had in a break off meeting later in the process was discussing how the movies were Tom’s escape from his responsibilities at home and what that meant for his memories. Cole wanted to explore what happened if the projections happened on the couch or on a lamp shade. The idea being that if the projections were missed that was okay because Cole wanted them to help enhance a scene or emotion, but not detract from what was happening with the actors. Subtle projections is starting to become contrary to what we find in most theatres today.

The next few meetings progressed with Michael Riha, the scenic designer, bringing new ideas to the table. His first design sketch centered around walls that were around 20 feet tall and
would be projection surfaces. There were a lot of corners in the walls and Cole remarked that he felt it looked too wealthy for this family. Cole wanted the apartment the Wingfield family lived in to seem cramped because the family was living off one income. The next sketch that was brought in was a triangular shaped set still covered in projection screens. This scenic design spoke to Cole. He liked the way it looked like the Jewel Box that Laura visits rather than going to typing school. The way the walls were created with the bracing showing looked like the windows of the Jewel Box. Between the third meeting and the last meeting, the scenic designer added a ceiling piece to the set, which is a challenge for lighting designers because with that addition we lose light from the top, back and some sides that help us mold the actors and make them stand out from the set. This particular ceiling piece was different from others because it was a projection screen and due to that I would have to be hyper-aware of where my electrics and lights would be placed to stay out of the projector’s image. An issue came up in our last design meeting when I presented research for Cole to start imagining what each era would look like. The images leaned towards an amber hue. Michael voiced his concern that the tones I was leaning towards were too warm and didn’t fit in the stark cold world he created. I did have one image in my research pictures that resonated with him, which became the new jumping off point for the lighting design. That image was of a woman sitting at a window and it had a blue hue. It felt cold and distant like she was looking in on something and was removed from the situation. In the moment I did not agree completely with his idea behind the color tones, but after re reading the script and analyzing the relationship between Tom and his mother again, I came to see what Michael was saying about the colors in the world.

The costume designer, Tanner McAlpin, and I had a few meetings with Cole outside of the scheduled meetings and one of the ideas we wanted to explore was a sepia toned world in
which warm color slowly grows as Tom becomes more engrossed in his memories. This idea became our main approach to the design of the production. We explored the idea of moving from a desaturated world into a saturated world as Tom becomes more engrossed in the memories.

After the last design meeting, Tanner and I found ourselves bouncing ideas around and exploring a world which would fit in the set Michael had created. Tanner ended up staying with the idea that the characters would gain color as the story progressed, but slightly shifted color tones to be cooler.

The projection designer, Shawn Irish, and I began having meetings frequently to talk through the projection content. Cole thought of the screen devices in *The Glass Menagerie* as small images or text projected on furniture and set pieces as an extra layer to the design. If they were missed by the audience, it wouldn’t have made a difference to the action and progression of the play. Once Michael had designed a set that featured walls that were projection screens, it became clear that the screen devices must be elevated in importance to tell the story. During one of the design meetings, Michael said he felt the items the actors touched should be real and accurate, but other items that the actors did not touch would become faded and imaginary. This idea directly tied the projections into the play at this point. The world that surrounded the characters was a construct of Tom’s mind while the characters were real. That then changed how Shawn went about the projection design. Originally, he was planning to use the text from the script as a supertitle or title card for each scene, much like Tennessee Williams describes in the stage directions of the script. As the design of the set evolved to large screens as walls, he decided to add images to the design to evoke the emotions of the scenes. The most fruitful meeting was when Shawn and I sat down in the theatre one day and worked to match the tones of his projections with my lighting palette to create a more cohesive world. As I had been working
in the space prior creating lighting looks for each scene, I found myself wondering how the projections would change the colors I picked as well as the intensities of my lights. This meeting helped in more ways than I could have imagined. Sitting in the theatre going scene by scene looking at the projections and lights and talking through why we each picked what we picked helped us understand the world of the play better. If one of us had a strong sense of why it needed to be one way over another, we would collaborate on the scene. The idea would usually work itself out in that discussion and we would end on the same page.

Cole and I had meetings outside of the design meetings to cover the nuances of the play. A week before the designer run, which is a run of the show for the designers to watch prior to tech week, Michael, Shawn, Cole, and I all sat down and went through scene by scene to see what Cole was hoping to see in each scene. This helped us understand his vision for the play and to craft the scenes into a harmonious design. He gave us descriptive words about what each scene felt like and what the stakes of the scenes consisted of. This let us “into his head” when it came to what he felt was important to the story and what was extraneous information.
B. Approach

The design meetings helped me formulate my approach to the play. In the initial conversations with Cole and Tanner, we had talked about what the sepia tone would look like in this piece. Whether the sepia would be a deep rich color or a subtle tone. Cole’s biggest push was to a cinematic quality by using color, texture, and angles. Through the research I had done, I had learned that the color tones that we often see in movies today are reversed from what filmmakers used in the 1960s. The sepia/warm tones were the “flashback” tones and the cooler and less colored tones were the reality tones. Because of how often Tom visits the movies, I felt it was fitting to pull these sepia tones from the older movies.

Due to Michael’s concern that sepia tones would not work well with the scenic design; I began to rethink how I would go about lighting the two eras because I thought the color shift would indicate to the audience that we were shifting time throughout the play. After going back to the script, I realized that while I had been obsessing with the idea of color tone shifts to be the tie between eras, I was wrong. The importance of memory versus the present was the most important idea. I began to research what memories are and how they are stored in the mind and just like that a rabbit hole then opened! I went back to the first design meeting notes and a phrase Cole had said, “memories reside in the heart.” I began thinking about my memories. Slowly I was beginning to realize that while I had thought that the memories resided in the brain, Cole emphasized that memories reside in the heart. All memories are tied to emotions. Almost everyone has happy memories, sad memories and angry memories; then there are the memories that shape who we are as people. Those are the memories that Tom is presenting us in this memory play.

I also began to ask my friends and coworkers about specific things in their past. This led to an observation that I began to toy with, but it helped solidify it. Almost all of our memories have
holes or missing parts. These gaps are sometimes filled in with plots that change the event in subtle ways and sometimes completely. I felt this was a strong notion because the play starts out with memories that are old for Tom and he doesn’t remember them perfectly. I then reread the play again to try to see how much this idea of missing chunks fit into the show’s story line, and oddly enough it fit really well. This discovery then led to a realization that the through line of this story isn’t entirely about the two different realities, but the recollection of memories; their clarity. Due to that, I knew that I needed to recreate the holes in Tom’s memories. Textures were the best way I could do that while still keeping the action visible and not be too heavy handed with light and dark. Texture in light adds a variation to the visible light to create areas of light and dark as someone walks through it. This helps enhance the idea of holes in darkness, but the texture allows light to be spread and it just gets a little darker without complete loss of light in areas.

While I didn’t drop the color tone shift idea completely, I realized utilizing cooler tones in the 1930s felt right when looking at Tom’s attitude to this time in his life. He was a cold person to his mother, Amanda, because she was pushing him to be someone, she expected him to be and he wanted nothing to do with. The warmer tones became the present (1960s) which was fitting because it felt like the sun and the warmth he felt to his sister when he remembered her.
C. Implementation

The process of creating *The Glass Menagerie* at the University of Arkansas was not without its challenges. I began designing the show in the spring semester of 2017. I spent days finding images that evoked the feeling and style I wanted to convey to the director (Appendix A). During the summer of 2017 while I was designing at Tibbits Summer Theatre, I created the light plot for *The Glass Menagerie*. Revisiting the notes from the design meetings and the extra meetings I had with the director, I was able to draft the initial plot pretty quickly. I knew that the textures to create the idea of the holes in Tom’s memories was going to be important. I also knew that the need to transition between different colors swiftly was going to be of tantamount importance.

One of the major aspects that determined where I could place lighting fixtures was the design of the set. Michael Riha created a set that was reminiscent of the jewel box in Chicago and it included a large ceiling piece upon which images would be projected. This ceiling piece caused me many a headache! I had to figure out a way to keep the lights out of view, but still be able to get the lights through the opening in the ceiling piece. I placed a pipe that ran along the angle of the ceiling piece and still was high enough so that I could get the lights between them. This position was crucial because visibility of the actors is the most important thing I do as a lighting designer. The angled pipes allowed me to get a light that could hit the actors from the side as well as another that could light them from behind. This allows the molding of a body and pushes them out from the set as well as giving the body a sense of three dimensionality. With the creation of this lighting position on both sides of the ceiling piece, I needed to be able to control and shape the beams of light. Ordinarily I would have used par cans or LED strip lights because they are fixtures that create a lot of light to wash across the surface it hits, but I knew I needed to keep the light off of the walls to make sure that I wasn’t muting out the projected images that Shawn would use to create the world visually. Once again, I went back to the text of the show
and determined that I only needed a few colors in my palette. A warm color, cool color, and something in between were what the script needed. After that read of the script, I deleted all the lights off my plot and started again, this time thinking about what was necessary to tell the story and not what gear I fantasized about having.

Knowing that the fixtures with top textures were going to be the main workhorses in the show, I started with them. Placing these lights in locations to make sure I would get the punch and spread that I needed, I then began to work my way to the rest of the plot. Once the top lights were located, it was on to trouble shooting the high sides coming from the pipes above. While all ceiling pieces cause challenges, this one began to cause more problems than I could have imagined. It was starting to cause shadows in the drafting program that I could not quite understand due to nature of the drawing. There were instances when the light beam would project through a solid surface and I would begin to get confused and aggravated in why this was happening. This required that I was constantly flipping between the 3D views to check how a light was going to be projected. Due to the nature of the projections and the small window of time I had to get this show hung, everything needed to be accurate.

Once I had all of the overhead plot completed, I began working on the auxiliary pipes which I soon dubbed as the “Angled Pipes.” I named them this due to how they looked. From the top they were at a perpendicular angle to each other and from the side they were angled towards the floor. They followed the intricate angles of the set. Once again, I flipped between 2D and 3D views trying to make sure that the pipes I drafted were even possible. I had to make sure that their supporting mechanisms were not going to be in the way of the projector beams. After I had the pipes placed, I began drafting the instruments that would be hung on them. I started with strip lights to blast solid beams of color across the stage to help the actors stand out from the set, but
in conversations with Shawn Irish, my mentor, I determined that I needed finer control of the light. That lead to using the most common fixtures in the industry, the ellipsoidal reflector spotlight. They produce a beam that you can shape with metal shutters as well as add color and texture. I knew from the beginning that I needed multiple patterns from the back to help tell this story as another way to help differentiate the worlds of the play.

A few years ago, The University of Arkansas’ Theatre Department purchased a software program called Capture. This program allows lighting designers to visualize their lighting design accurately before hanging the real fixtures in the theatre. *The Glass Menagerie* had so many challenges scenically I wanted to take some time to experiment with the angles that would help enhance the mood of the scene. I uploaded a 3D version of the set into Capture as well as a 3D version of my rough plot. I began turning lights on and off to see how they hit the stage and if I could make the specific shots where I wanted the lights to land.

I never wanted the actors to walk through shadow, but I wanted it to seem as if they were walking through Tom’s broken memories. Because of our need to see the actor’s face when they talk, I selected textures that had a lot of open space, but still provided me with ample areas of light and shadow. I started with a pattern I sometimes use called Internal Reflections, which is very geometric and linear, but in all of my visualizations something felt wrong. I went back to the drawing board with the textures. One day in tech for the musical *Footloose* at Tibbits, I was waiting to come back from a break and began doodling on my notepad. I had been talking to the assistant stage manager about *The Glass Menagerie*, explaining what I wanted to do with the show and the emotional response I felt when reading the play over and over again. About that time, we both realized that the doodle I had been drawing looked similar to a gobo, which is a piece of metal that has a pattern cut out that when placed inside a light is then projected onto the
This doodle was like a gobo I was using in our first show to create a subtle vine like texture. I went to the Rosco website and began looking for the gobo that I had used in The Cemetery Club that would give the feeling of the brokenness of Tom’s memories of his family. Using words like broken, jagged and organic I came across the Jagged Moonlight gobo. Upon seeing the image that Rosco had of the texture I was immediately hooked. Just to be on the safe side, I ended up dropping the texture into some lights in the visualization program to see how it played with the gray tone of the set and the other lights drafted. I was beyond stunned when I placed it in the high sides and it worked, because I felt this texture might be too aggressive to be a pattern that came from above and had too large of empty spaces in the metal to be a back pattern, however Jagged Moonlight had found its new home. When the texture illuminated the virtual actor in Capture, I knew it would be indispensable to the telling of this story.

Next, I wanted to find another gobo to come from the top to give the floor a variation. I started looking through the Rosco gobo catalog online and came across Broken Weave, which I felt would help tell the story of a family trying to stay together, but eventually falls apart. It is a tight knit texture but had a lot of open space which worked well in a top texture wash.

Once I had found Broken Weave, I knew I wanted something linear from the back because Tom felt trapped like he was caged or in prison, and all the other textures were soft or blobby. I had remembered sitting in the theatre for The Lion King show at Walt Disney World and liked the pattern they had on the walls. I looked through all of the manufacturer’s catalogs and I found one that was close, and I enjoyed the random nature of the lines. This gobo is called Chicken Scratch from Rosco. I ended up being drawn to this texture in The Glass Menagerie during Tom’s transitions because he was clawing to get out of his current predicament.
The intelligent lights were the next things I had to place on the plot. Because of the ceiling piece and the fixture’s size, I knew I couldn’t have them overhead, so I got crafty. I knew I wanted the VL1100s out front because they have a zoom, shutters, and textures. I knew these would be used to create a texture wash or even face light in the gentle moments.

The VL3500s were next on my list, as I was constantly going back to something that Cole kept requesting; he wanted silhouettes of the characters behind the projection screens. I started with the 3500s on a boom behind the screens to create the silhouettes that Cole wanted on the screens, but these movers are extremely flexible and therefore valuable to me elsewhere in the plot, so I felt it was a waste to use them for only the silhouette moments. One of my initial ideas was to have lights scraping across the fire escape allowing another way for the exterior to differ from the interior. I eventually ended up with the VL3500s on the bottom of the cove positions to allow them to graze across the walls as well as create a low angle light as reinforcement for the live flame during the power outage.

The VL2500s are our most commonly used moving lights due to the good textures they have. I knew I wanted to have some as a high side to allow coverage when the actors move into the audience. I placed one on each apron pipe over the doors. Having these fixtures over the door, it also allowed to have a light to fill in shadows that were created. With the remaining three, I kept thinking about using them as specials from the front, which came in handy when the director informed me about a month into the rehearsal period that Tom would be entering from the back of the house. Having the fixtures in the front of house, I was able to use them as automated follow spot when needed as well as help isolate the actors when necessary.

The Martin Mac Auras were the next due to their small nature, I knew I could put a couple overhead and they would still have a good move radius and because of their zoom I would have
control of their spread which was extremely important. I placed a few over the main room of the set and then one as back light for the fire escape. One more ended up on each Apron Boom to allow for some strong sidelight when called for. The lights allowed me to change the color of the stage easily when it was necessary in the play.

The next lights I needed to place were the specials. These are lights that are used only for a specific purpose. The script calls for a power outage and the next scene should look like it is lit by candle light and I needed to reinforce actual light source. Knowing that they would have the candles on the edge of the stage I wanted the light to come from below because I wanted it to seem realistic. I added Par cans into the pit. I was not entirely sure where they needed to go height wise, so I made a note that I needed to test angles once back at school. The next specials were for the silhouette. Due to the nature of the set I had to prioritize the ERS fixtures I ended up running out of the type of light I would have usually used, so I decided to go with a zoom. This allowed me to be able to hang a light from any position and make it as big or small as I needed it before shaping the light beam. I knew I needed two lights for the Gentleman Caller specials, one for the kitchen and one for the fire escape. The purpose of these lights is to differentiate the characters in the scene from the notion of a character that is being talked about. The most often we see this is for the Gentleman Caller, Jim. He tends to be a figure that has such a strong role in the play while not actually being present in the show until the second act. Tennessee Williams had specified screen images of the Gentleman Caller which Cole wanted to be a live silhouette which is where this idea came in. Another moment in the “real” locations would be the kitchen where we see Laura washing the dishes or Amanda making coffee. Again the convention of the silhouette is to allow the audience to understand that person is being talked about, but acknowledge that they aren’t active in the scene. Letting the audience know what was a reality vs
ever present figure was going to be a challenge, but knew I wanted the “real” locations to be a cool blue like the 1930s color would feel, that way it would keep the same tone and feeling that has been established as Tom’s memory. The Gentleman Caller’s specials wanted to be cool to stay in the same world, but I wanted it to be warmer and richer in color than the rest of the world because the Gentleman Caller was still someone Old Tom thought about with some warmth. While this was not the ideal light for the job, it ended up working out better than I could have expected.

After a summer spent at Tibbits Summer Theatre in Michigan, I was elated to start hanging the plot for *The Glass Menagerie*. Little did I know that the master electrician assigned to the show was not going to be there for the hang, which was the first of many challenges. In our first week back on contract, Tyler, our Staff Master Electrician, and I began to hang my plot. It was slow going because we had to work around the massive ceiling piece that hung in our way as well as being hyperaware of our surroundings. Because facilities had been working on the roof that previous summer, we were made aware that debris could fall from the roof and damage the set or lights. Every once in a while, we had help from some of the undergraduates on work study in the shop. Those days seemed to go faster because there were lots of hands working to get the lights hung, cabled and ready to go. Once all the lights were hung as well as having power and data connected, we flew out all the battens and did a channel check to make sure they were all responsive. After we gave Weston, the Technical Director, the all clear on the overhead positions he had us put the projection fabric on the ceiling piece. Once we had that done, we flew it up and out of the way and waited for the day that the rest of the set would be installed. Occasionally we had bolt heads or random items fall from the grid because of the irresponsible roofers. We were lucky that none fell on any of the people working on stage or even the delicate ceiling piece. We
then moved to the front of house lighting positions, balcony rail and ceiling slot. These proved to be a little challenging because of the instruments that I chose to hang there. We had to hang the moving lights on their sides from pipes that aren’t a common diameter for hanging positions. To hang these moving lights, we had to find something that we would stick between the pipe and the base of the clamp to let it have something else to grip onto. I was worried that throughout the time that they were up on that position that they would slip and fall or something terrible would happen. My fears, however turned out to be unfounded.

Because our backstage space needed to remain open during the build process, positions like my onstage booms were the last thing we were able to add. I was thankful that I wasn’t using booms upstage, so it wasn’t a problem for me. Most of the heavily used instrumentation was in the coves and apron boom positions. This allowed for the hang to run pretty smoothly because I didn’t have to worry about the upstage booms until near the end.

After we finally got the upstage booms located and the fixtures hung, it was time for focus. This was fairly easy because I had already preplanned where everything was going to be going to be focused and took the time to check each beam in Vectorworks to make sure they could make the shots I was asking of them. Overall this process was easy. I felt we made good time as I focused the lights. Rather than our usual weekend work call, Weston had us focus during the week prior to our work call with the knowledge that if we finished then we wouldn’t have to work the weekend. Also, the scenic department could have the whole weekend to complete their lists. We were able to complete focus during the week, so scenic was able to have the time. That next week I was able to sit down and begin prepping my show file in order to make writing the cues and tech move a little smoother. Annika Howard, one of the undergraduates in the Stage Tech 2 class was assigned to help me on the console throughout the week so I could just look at
the stage and not worry about technical things. She became a huge help in my process. It was very beneficial to step away from behind the monitors and just create art.

Later during the week, Shawn came into the space and started loading his content into the projection computer using the Watchout software program. Throughout that process he would ask what I thought about certain images and we would then discuss how to tweak our visions and pull colors and mood from the other person to make a more cohesive look. The most beneficial discussions came when designing the transitions. One in particular had Amanda crossing the stage near the end of Act one and she crossed under a moon projection, stopped and looked at it then continued. From Shawn’s image of the moon I began making the colors cooler to match the temperature of the moon projection. The feeling of the scene became colder and it felt just right. There were so many of these moments in the days before tech when we realized something needed to be altered slightly to help enhance the mood or texture of what was happening in the scene.

The following week were the technical rehearsals. Cole decided he wanted to sit down and talk through every scene of the show before starting tech on the following Friday. This was highly useful because he saw and felt moments differently than I did. This process started conversations between me and other team members.

Friday was our first night of tech. We started at the beginning of the show and began to run it. During the tech process, we worked out the shadow play behind the walls. Through trials, we learned that saving the silhouette moments for certain moments was more beneficial than adding them every time someone passed behind the screens. The shadows cast from an actor walking in the light from the projection had a more defined edge, which allowed the moments when the Gentleman Caller was mentioned worked with conventional stage lighting to have a softer edge
and feel like a different convention. The only other times that traditional lighting instruments were used to create these shadows were to illuminate a moment that would not be seen otherwise, like when Laura is in the kitchen and we wanted to see her reaction to what is happening in the dining room. The other striking shadow moment came when the Gentleman Caller said goodnight. His shadow on the exterior wall as he struggled with whether to say more to Laura was a very tender moment in the play. This let the audience see the struggle Jim was having as he is having this internal dilemma and helps inform the emotions in the room.

The Tuesday after tech weekend is when costumes were added. One of the problems I had to combat once the costumes were added was balancing the value level of the costumes with the intensity of the lights. I tried to balance Amanda’s silky cream blouse with Tom’s dark brown jacket which over all did not work if I wanted to still be able to see both of their faces clearly. In the end, with some adjustments from both lighting and costumes, were able to make the costumes look great and still provide adequate light for the actors.

The tech process was the most helpful in creating a vocabulary between the actors and elements around them. Fine tuning these elements is what helped make this particular piece as powerful as it was.
D. Reflection

While the design process of *The Glass Menagerie* was one of my most challenging to date, I grew as an artist and a person. During the progression of this design, I learned how to use my voice and to form my own opinions about the world around me through my design work and the collaboration process. Those new-found opinions influenced my design in ways that made me reflect upon my previous ideas. I was starting to find my voice in a world where I felt like I had none, and that voice was emerging in my work. In life as a young adult, I constantly hear “your generation is…” usually it is something negative that is happening in the world around us. I am not the type of person who likes to be in conflict with my superiors and elders, so I usually found myself agreeing or just not saying anything, but through this process I learned how to harness what my opinions were and let them fuel my designs.

At the start of the design meetings, I felt that I was not contributing enough because as a lighting designer we often contribute to the design process in the later meetings, once the set and costumes are designed. During the first one-on-one meeting with Cole, I learned that he valued my ideas as a collaborator. Since he and I had already worked together on numerous projects, I was concerned that he was going to micromanage the design like he did on those previous pieces. That first meeting was a breakthrough on our collaboration, when he made it quite clear that he wanted my input when it came to the lighting design and was extremely open to listening to my ideas when it came to the transitions. Cole wanted this show to be an open collaboration between us and the other designers. This was a breath of fresh air and took a lot of my worries away. Overall the collaboration with Cole was smooth. We did have a few bumps in the road around tech week. They consisted of movement and actions still being fluid for the actors, requiring me to refocus the moving lights, which took my eyes away from other locations on the stage. We quickly solved this by a word with the cast, that once the lights have been
programmed, they needed to be consistent in their movement. I benefited highly from this process because I was able to be a larger part of the collaboration not just someone on the sidelines.

Over all *The Glass Menagerie* was a wonderful and eye-opening experience for me. I learned a lot about my voice as an artist and that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Theatre is a collaborative art form and if you take everyone’s ideas and sort through them then the final product will most likely be the best version it can be.
IV. Bibliography


V. Appendices
   A. Appendix A: Research

Figure 1: Research images that came about during the discussion of the play.
B. Appendix B: Analysis

_The Glass Menagerie_
By Tennessee Williams

Where are they?
The apartment that Tom shares with his mother and sister.
Location is St. Louis, Missouri

When are they?
Takes places in 1937
Memories in 1920s

Who are they?
The Wingfields are not your ordinary family. They are living their daily lives, but we get to see into the horror that it is. Tom is trying to just live his life with his nagging mother always down his throat, his sister Laura has a deformity that does not help her get to the place her mother wants her to be. The mother, Amanda, has very high hopes and expectations for her children, but comes off very forward and demanding. Government and religion don’t play into this very much. It is more about family and existing outside of the family image.

What happened before the play?
Laura has been sent to business school because Amanda has not seen any men showing an interest in her daughter.
The father has left the picture without any warning.

What is the function of each character in the play?
Principle Characters:
Protagonist:
Tom: He’s the one telling the story. We get his thoughts and we see his character sympathetically.
Antagonist:
Amanda Wingfield, Tom's mother is the closest thing to an antagonist in the play. She is the clearest villain in Tom's life. She presents him with the greatest conflict, blocking him from having a life of choice and freedom. He must overcome her constant, demanding and nagging behavior to escape from the confining apartment. Laura: She’s the only one that, he reader, doesn’t get annoyed with all the time or feel the need to judge on the basis of his/her awful moral decisions, and she has all these great protagonist qualities like being perceptive and kind and beautiful. She has the fatal flaw of shyness. They are both antagonists because they are dependent on him which is the reason he has to stay in his situation.

Secondary Characters:
Jim O’Connor, the gentleman caller, a friend of theirs in high School. Laura’s high school love. Helps Laura overcome some problems, but then breaks her heart.

What kind of dialogue do the characters speak?
They are speaking in a “formal” version of English. It is heightened, but not so far that the normal “working” class wouldn’t be able to understand it. It has been slowed down because they are “southern”.

What happens in the play?
Amanda find out that Laura dropped out of business school. Amanda nags Tom to find Laura a suitor. Tom does and it happens to be Laura’s love from high school. Laura falls in love again only to find out that Jim is engaged.

What is the play’s theme?
The difficulty of accepting reality.
The impossibility of true escape.
The unrelenting power of memory.
Appendix C: Light Plot

Figure 1: Light Plot
D. Appendix D: Section View and Other Drafting Plates

Figure 1: Section Plate
Figure 2: Boom Plate
Figure 3: Angled Pipes Plate
Figure 4: Deck Electrics Plate
Figure 1: Magic Sheet 1

Figure 2: Magic Sheet 2
### Figure 1: Sample of the Channel Hookup Pages 1 and 2

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<td>250W</td>
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<td>(30)</td>
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### 2nd Electric

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<th>Channel</th>
<th>ADR</th>
<th>Dim</th>
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### 4th Electric

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**Figure 2: Sample Instrument Schedule Pages 1 and 2**
<table>
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<th>Cue #</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>AF</th>
<th>Follow</th>
<th>Hang</th>
<th>Delay</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>House Full</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>House Out</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Blackout</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slow fade up of Mover</td>
<td>With flick of lighter</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Slow Build</td>
<td>“To begin with, I turn back time.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Glass glows</td>
<td>Music Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behind couch</td>
<td>Tom Crosses behind couch</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom crosses to center</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom crosses to escape</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amanda lit</td>
<td>“The other characters are my mother...”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laura lit</td>
<td>“... my sister...”</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Panel #2</td>
<td>“… and a gentleman caller...”</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Panel out</td>
<td>“…something that we live for.”</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Sample of the Cue Sheet page 1
F. Appendix F: Production Photographs

Figure 1: Amanda comes home from a DAR meeting, where she learned her daughter has dropped out of school. Photo Taken by Shawn Irish.
Figure 2: Tom in the 1950s. He is reflecting on the argument between his mother, Amanda, and his sister, Laura, about Laura dropping out of typing school. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe
Figure 3: A memory inside a memory. Amanda recounting her gentleman callers. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe
Figure 4: Power goes out and the source of light is by candle. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe
Figure 5: Dinner before the power goes out. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe
Figure 6: Fight between Amanda and Tom. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe
Figure 7: Tom and Jim talking about escaping their reality. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe.
Figure 8: Laura at her menagerie. Transition look between scenes Photo taken by Shawn Irish.
Figure 9: Amanda trying to sell magazines to have some income. Photo taken by Catie Blencowe.
Figure 10: End of Act 1.
Photo taken by Shawn Irish

Figure 11: Amanda confiding in Tom about Laura.
Photo taken by Catie Blencowe