

# STANDARDS FOR DESIGNER'S PORTFOLIOS

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Report of the Committee on Graphic Standards,

Mr. Paul Camp Chairman. An Official Recommendation of the Performing Arts Training and Education

Commission of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc.

Statement by the Commissioner for Performing Arts Training and Education.

One of the purposes of the PATE Commission is to establish and further professional standards for theatre designers and technicians. The following position paper by Mr. Graham is fully supported by the members of the PATE Commission and has undergone almost two years of extensive review and revision by that body. It is a recommendation for implementation, where possible, as an integral part of curricula and is the beginning of a set of recommended national standards for theatre graphic communication.

*Professor Earle is 2nd Vice President of USITT. Professor John Bracewell, Ithaca College, is the current Commissioner for PATE. (Ed.)*

It seems apparent that educational institutions offering design education programs should also prepare their students to present examples of their work. Yet adequate evidence of the education and experience of young designers often does not exist. Such a situation is detrimental to *both* the student and the institution.

When a student moves from one school to another with no graphic evidence of abilities, his new teachers are hard pressed to evaluate his work

Precious time is lost before deficiencies are corrected or the brilliant student challenged to the utmost of his abilities.

Young designers seeking employment often present the most meager evidence of their accomplishments. Employers are naturally reluctant to hire someone of unproven abilities; or, after hiring him, disappointed to discover his abilities to be something less than had been supposed.

Institutions miss the opportunity to retain evidence of the quality of their program. Photographic copies of representative student work can provide a permanent record of the school's work - both for purposes of course evaluation and student recruitment - and as an indication of the effectiveness of individual artist - teachers.

The purpose of this proposal is to describe a set of minimum standards that design students should be expected to meet. There will undoubtedly exist situations where these standards may very well be exceeded, and this may be particularly true at the

secondary school level where there is a considerable disparity in what constitutes a drama program. Yet, portfolios can be prepared by a student at an institution of almost any size and type. Certainly not all of the work contained in portfolios need be derived from formal classroom instruction; students should be encouraged to undertake independent projects apart from formal classroom instruction. It is hoped that the implementation of these standards will effect the development of a number of imaginative programs in designer education.

## The Portfolio

The work contained in a student's portfolio will depend upon the student's academic level and his major area of interest within the design field.

In all portfolios, each drawing should be adequately identified; the name of the play, the playwright, the name of the designer, the date the design was completed and the scale used, if applicable.

In those instances when the design is actually produced, sufficient information should be given about the producing agency, production facilities and the like to allow an accurate evaluation of the work.

## Scene Designers

At the high school level the student should be encouraged to keep a collection or scrapbook of his drawings, sketches and renderings. Photographs of any work actually used in production should be included. Teachers at the secondary school level should encourage design orientated students to make up a portfolio or scrapbook and to be prepared to show it to the teaching artists when entering an undergraduate college program.

At the completion of the bachelor's degree a scene designer should be able to present a small but balanced portfolio with these minimum contents:

(a) Six matted renderings in color on board no smaller than 15 x 20 inches or larger than 20 x 30 inches. Renderings should be in either transparent or opaque water color (designer's color, gauche, casein, etc.) or both, plus one other medium. The renderings should clearly indicate the use of lighting in the design.

(b) Models or photographs of models might be included in lieu of as many as four of the renderings. Models should be constructed to scale and fully rendered in color, and in a manner imitative of the painting techniques to be used on the setting itself.

(c) Scaled floor plans for each rendering or model floor plans should normally be in one-half inch scale and display an understanding of the normally accepted drafting conventions and symbols. Floor plans should be complete with elevation marks, center line, proscenium line, proscenium wall, masking, backings, furniture, etc., and differentiation between full-height and partial walls. In non-proscenium forms, the playing area should be outlined with a distinctive line and in the case of Theatre In The Round staging, there should be two center lines perpendicular to each other.

Where a multiple setting is presented, the shifting pattern should be clearly laid out. Elements flown or suspended should also be indicated and a hanging plot included.

(d) Construction drawings of one of the designs above, or a series of construction drawings illustrating typical scenic construction (perhaps executed as a class exercise.) Drawings should be in one-half inch scale.

(e) Property sketches in pen and ink, charcoal, cont` pencil or other appropriate medium for one of the designs above, or similar sketches illustrating an understanding of the techniques involved. Sketches should include proper scale or measured proportions and appropriate information concerning materials and construction techniques.

At the completion of the Master's degree the scene designer's portfolio should be expanded considerably. At a minimum the student's portfolio ought to contain:

(a) At least twelve designs in color, as above; each properly matted. These renderings should encompass a wide range of dramatic pieces from a number of historical periods. The artist should display a knowledge of presentational styles including both proscenium and non-proscenium staging. The portfolio should also contain designs for an opera, a ballet and a musical comedy. at least one of the other designs should be for one of the more frequently produced plays of Shakespeare. Of these, at least one design should be completely presented including a number of thumbnail sketches of individual scenes.

(b) From three to six of the designs above should also be represented by color photographs of fully rendered color scale models.

(c) Floor plans for each design as indicated in the section above.

(d) Front elevations, construction drawings, details, sections, isometrics, etc., in appropriate scale (normally one half inch) as required for one of the designs above. These drawings should be complete enough for the design to be constructed by a commercial scene shop.

(e) One or more painter's elevations, to scale, for an elaborate drop, show curtain, or other scenic item for one of the designs above. In addition, sample painter's elevations showing wood paneling, moldings, marble, foliage, etc.

(f) Property sketches in appropriate media for one of the productions, as in the section immediately preceding.

(g) Color photographs or slides of any of the designs above actually produced. These should be properly identified as to the producing group, director, date and place of production.

It should be particularly noted that a student awarded an M.F.A. with emphasis in design should be able to pass the U.S.A.A. examinations after a year or two of employment in the field. To that end, the student's portfolio should display a knowledge of architectural styles, research ability in historical detail, a range of painting and rendering styles, and dramatic flair and imagination.

## Costume Designers

At the high school level students interested in costume design should keep a loose-leaf scrapbook or portfolio of costume sketches. Swatches should be included if possible. Photographs of costumes actually produced should also be included. These may be either production photographs or individual pictures posed by the actors.

At the completion of the bachelor's degree a student designer should present a portfolio of designs including at least the following:

(a) A series of individual sketches indicating familiarity with historical periods and the principal lines of costume for those periods.

(b) A series of color renderings, swatches, showing costumes for a small cast play or for one scene of a large cast or multiple scene production. These plates should be complete in every detail and be so drawn as to indicate the cut, trim, fastenings, accessories, etc., that may be required.

(c) At least six detail drawings of such items as hats, wigs, jewelry, helmets, etc., with indications of construction technique.

(d) Samples of patterns drawn to scale; and properly labeled to indicate the part of the garment, style and period.

At the completion of the Master's degree the costumer should be able to present a portfolio of complete costume designs for at least ten productions, one of which should be for a play by Shakespeare and one of which should be a musical or opera.

(a) Costume plates rendered in water color or other appropriate media on board or paper no smaller than 10 x 15 inches and no larger than 15 x 20 inches. Plates should be swatched, and should clearly show all trim, fasteners, and the like.

It should be noted that these renderings should be of such quality as to show not only the line and color, but texture as well. The figures shown should be properly proportioned and posed to show the costume to the best advantage. Additional smaller views (such as rear views) should be included wherever necessary. Each plate should be labeled to indicate the character's name and the scene in which the costume is to be worn, as well as the name of the play.

(b) A costume plot, broken down by French scenes and with a careful description of each costume, should be provided for at least one production.

(c) Scaled patterns, appropriately marked, for representative costumes in one or more of the productions, with emphasis on the more elaborate or unusual garments. A minimum of six patterns should be prepared at a scale of one inch to the foot.

(d) Detailed drawings for one of the productions of accessories such as jewelry, hats, wigs, shoes, etc., as may be required for the information of the wardrobe technicians.

(e) Slides or photographs of constructed garments and accessory details.

## Lighting Designers

High school students should keep a careful record of work in this area including photographs of productions and copies of light plots, instrument schedules, cue sheets, etc., that the student may have used in connection with high school productions.

At the completion of the bachelor's degree a lighting designer should be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the physical properties of light and electricity and ability to apply that knowledge to stage use. At a minimum the student should present the following:

(a) Light Plot(s): From one to three scaled floor plans with lighting instruments placed in proper location and the lighting areas outlined and numbered. The use of the international lighting instrument symbols is recommended.

(b) Instrument schedule(s) for the plot(s) above to include instrument numbers, instrument type, lamp type, and wattage, color media number and/or name, special equipment (barn doors, double -jumpers, etc.) outlet number, control circuit and area of focus or functions.

(c) Sample cue sheets for at least the major cues in one production. It is suggested that the lighting portfolio be prepared in conjunction with the scene design course; each student preparing a light plot for their own scenic designs. If this is not possible, then the instructor should provide a sample design and the student prepare a lighting design for it. In either case, a copy of the design should be retained and presented with the work listed above.

At the completion of the Master's degree the student should demonstrate not only the craft, but the art of lighting by presenting designs including the aesthetic application of lighting principles to enhance the mood and provide the illumination that the text requires. At a minimum the student should present the following:

- (a) Designs for six productions; with renderings in color and/or black and white illustrating the effect of the light at selected moments in the play. Such drawings should include appropriately costumed figures as well as backgrounds, if any.
- (b) Light plots as above.
- (c) Instrument schedules as above.
- (d) Sample cue sheets for at least one complete production.
- (e) Include slides or photographs of actual productions.

### Combination Portfolios

Since most employment opportunities for young designers are in "one man" and "two man" shops, the possibility of presenting a portfolio of design work in either two or three of the foregoing fields should be considered. In such a case, the designer might well present designs for fewer productions and present work in additional fields. In combination portfolios the designs included should be coordinated, at least in part. Certainly, at least one production should be completely presented, with renderings and drawings of the setting, complete light plot and costume designs; all properly coordinated according to style of presentation and display a unified concept of design.

Such combination portfolios might well be prepared in conjunction with class-work; the teaching artists in each area coordinating the necessary assignments to produce a fully completed design at the end of the course of study.

As a general rule, the guidelines given in the design sections above should prove adequate to indicate the content of a portfolio of this type.

### Type of Presentation

Since portfolios themselves are usually quite bulky and difficult, if not impossible, to mail under Postal Service regulations, other methods of presentation should be considered.

(a) Slides: 35 mm slides of portfolio drawings, renderings, costume plates, etc., should be clearly numbered in sequential order. The slide sequence should include title slides giving the name of the play. Such information as play title, character name and scene, etc., should be clearly lettered on the bottom of the drawing so that it is legible when the slide is projected. An acceptable alternative would be numbered, typed index accompanying the slides. When designs have been used for an actual production, the rendering, costume plates, etc., should be followed by slides of the actual production so that an easy comparison can be made between the design on paper and the design in production.

(b) Presentation Book: A photographic presentation book can also be used to present color photographs of actual productions. Although such books are bulkier than a slide presentation, it is possible to fold and include sample drawings and light plots in them; the very items that often do not photograph well. All items in such a book should be attractively mounted and appropriately labeled. Where possible, renderings should be mounted next to actual production photographs.

In the case of actual productions, the inclusion of a floor plan and section of the theatre used would be most useful in evaluation the designs.

### School Records

The photographic copies used by schools might be in either slide forms or carefully maintained color prints. Of the two, slides are probably the preferable form, from the point of view of both convenience and cost.

Such records should contain the best examples of student work, whether produced or not. In cases where the student's designs are actually produced, photographs of both the designs and the productions should be presented for purposes of comparison. The photographs should be identified by play title, name of designer, year of graduation, degree granted, and the name of the supervising artist-teacher. If the design was actually produced it would be appropriate to note whether it was a major production or a laboratory project and by whom it was directed.

### Conclusion

Unfortunately few institutions now prepare students to present a portfolio as complete as those outlined herein. Nevertheless, this proposal points the direction to be taken if educational theatre is to adequately prepare designers to work to professional standards, such as those set by United Scenic Artists of America.

For artist-teachers this proposal represents not only a method of presenting student work, but also a means of upgrading standards to more nearly approximate those recognized and practiced in the professional theatre.

