

## **Statement of Approach / Thought Process**

Alex Meyer, Scenic Designer

*Pinnochio, Fall 2017*

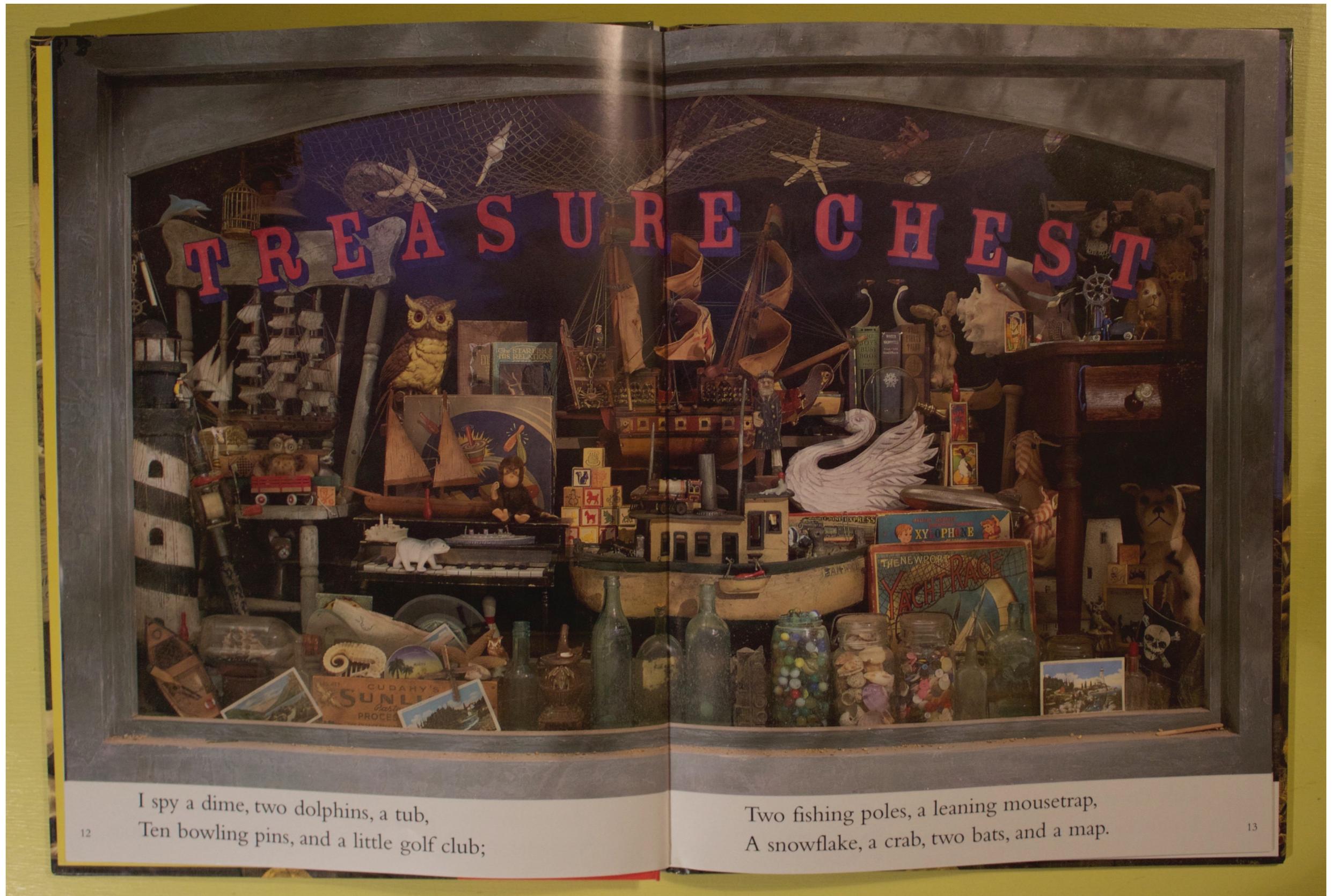
I find this script to be a story in the rough. The described bare stage is full of potential energy, and awaits the action of the script. As storytellers, I feel that the influence of the environment is incredibly strong, as they're limited to what's available to pull together an impromptu telling of Pinnochio. Yet with a strong imagination, the reality that's been established before the show starts is overtaken by the force of the story, and objects and places become vivid representations of something else. This duality of form brought me back to the imagery behind some of my favorite childhood books, I-Spy's and Seek-and-Finds. Below I've begun to explore what it is about these images that I find striking, and how I feel they can serve as a jumping point for this design.



22  
I spy a goose, a cat lying down,  
A paintbrush, an acorn, a chick, and a clown;

23 27  
A buffalo nickel, a bird on a block,  
Six musical bears, and a key for a lock.

This image came to mind because of the textural qualities found in the raw wood. This mid-process aesthetic of woodworking alludes to both the toy making that's so iconic to the story and the state of the set at the top of the show. I look to the raw wood for a potential color palate.



I spy a dime, two dolphins, a tub,  
Ten bowling pins, and a little golf club;

Two fishing poles, a leaning mousetrap,  
A snowflake, a crab, two bats, and a map.

I like the way this display is framed and am drawn to the depth created in the layering of objects. I want the stage to have the same sort of presence; deep, reaching farther back than the audience can see, and close, right up and perhaps into the audience. Greg Banks notes that the audience should be allowed to partake in the storytelling, and the freedom of not having the fourth wall allows the characters to tell the story in whatever way they know best. Including the audience in this space will help with that.



Intrigued by the work of I-Spy photographer Walter Wick, I created a photo series that shares roots with his style, but pulling from particular memories and relating objects in a visual, textural, and sentimental way. This photo in particular has an air of being stumbled upon, much like the beginning of the show. I look to this image for color as well, with the wood tones encasing the colorful action.

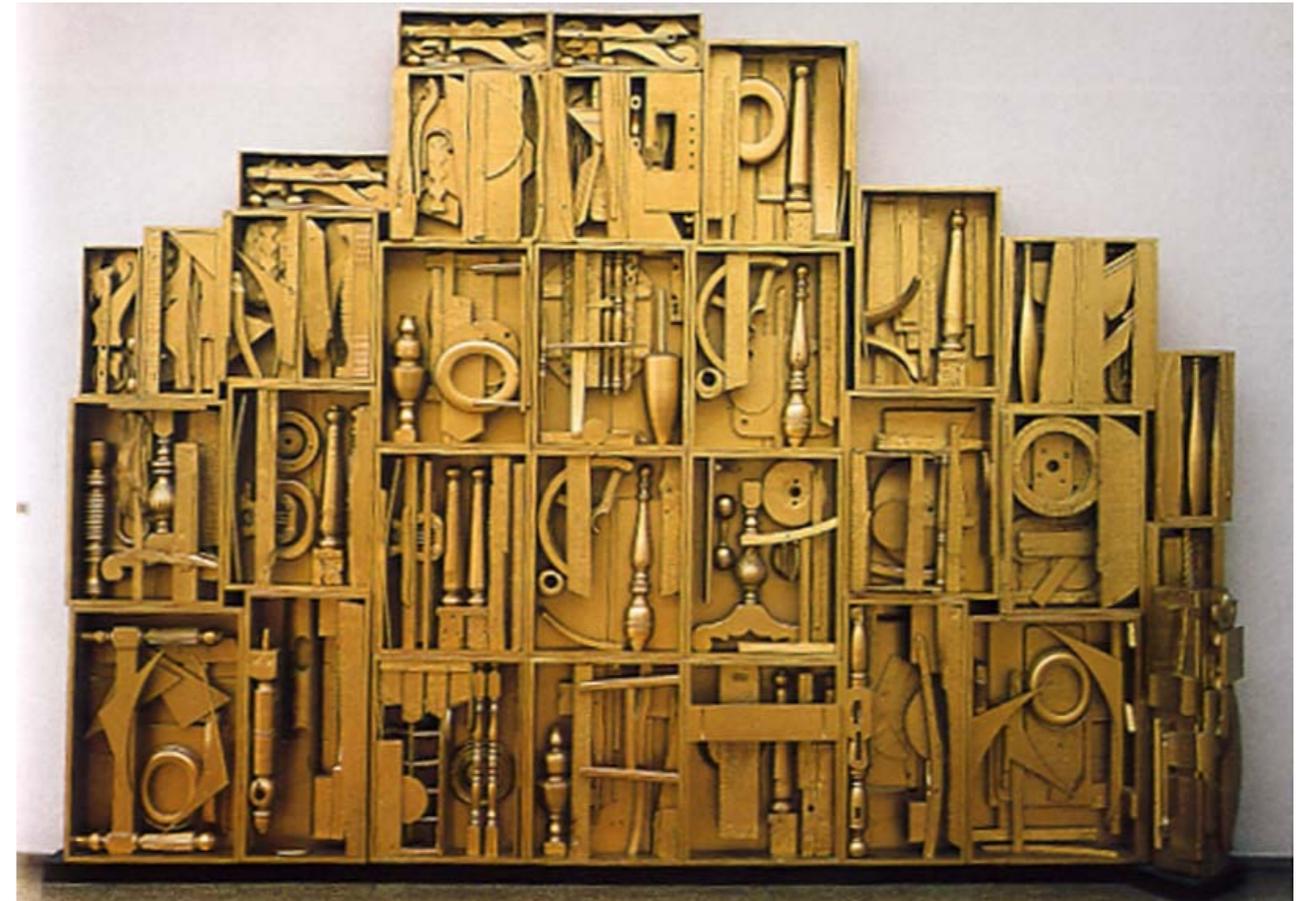


This photo works with effective shadow play, something of considerable note in this production. The way the light works with these objects allows for the eye to interpret them as their basic shapes and forms, not as what they actually are.

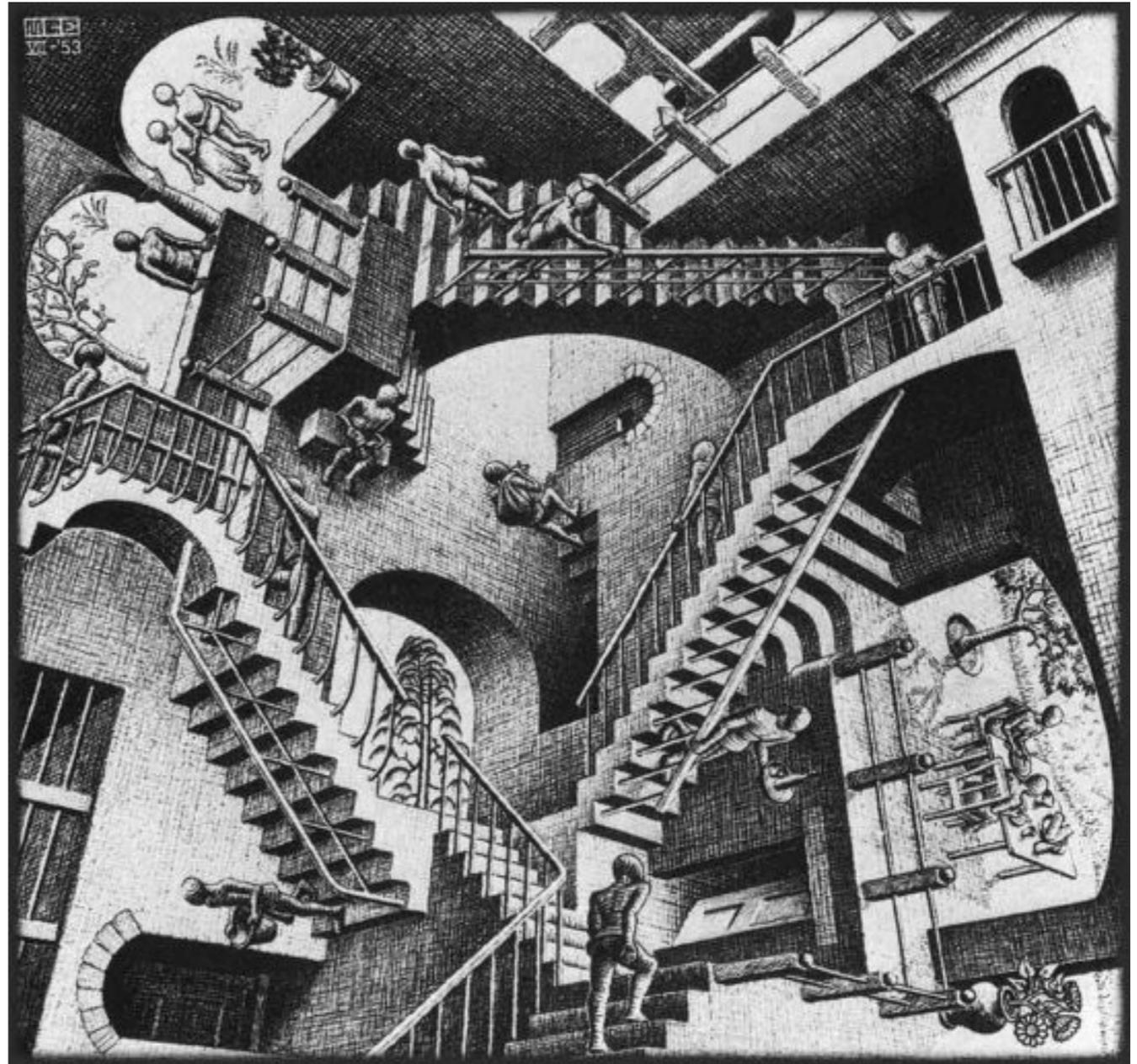
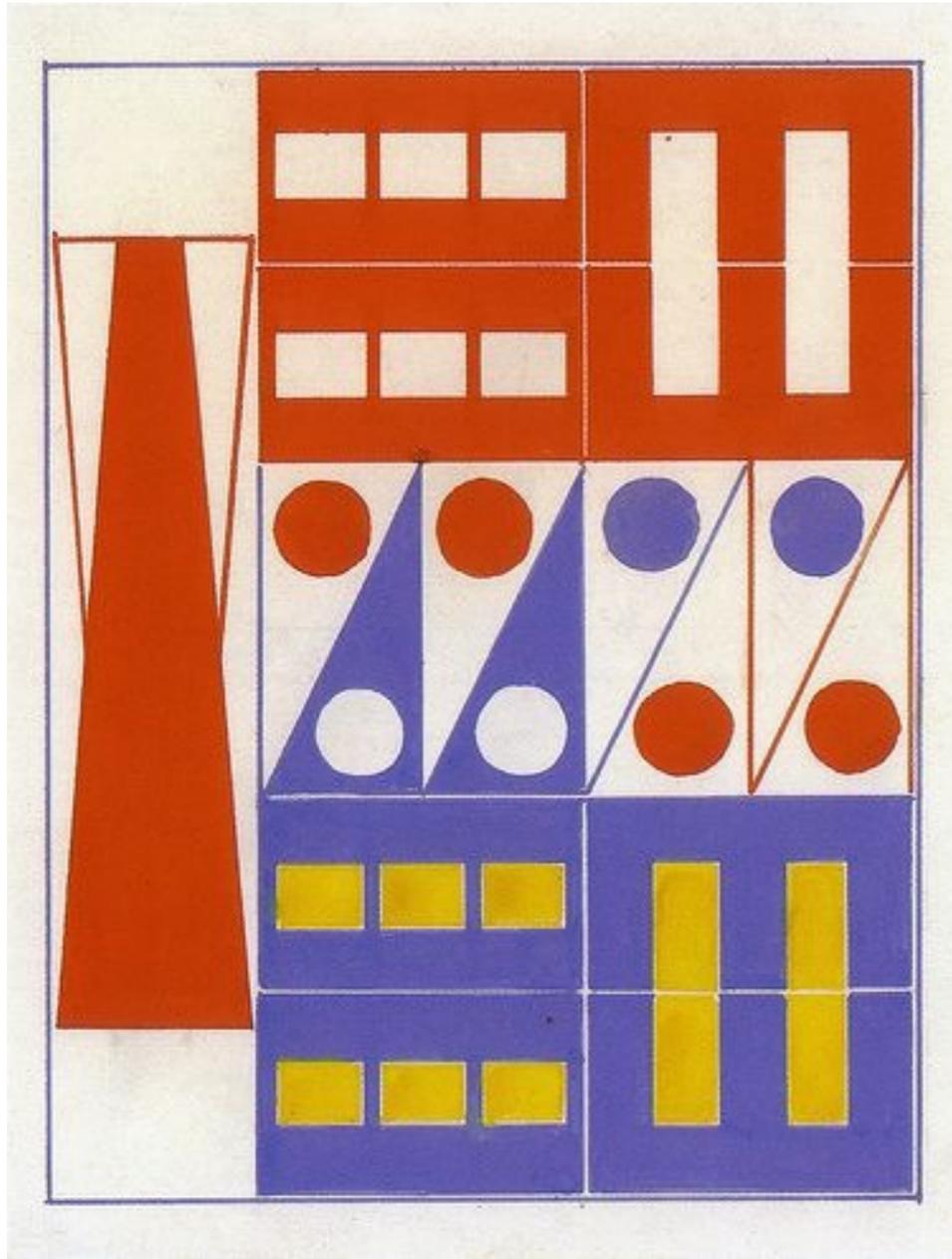
This construction site is right down the block.  
The door of the cement truck looks like a LOCK.



This is a spread from a Look-Alikes book, which creates miniature environments built out of objects disguised as their scaled-down counterparts. The mustard bottle as the cement mixer, the paint tube as the airplane, and the cinnamon sticks as lumber all point to something I'd like this show to embody; the allowing of the imagination to run free creates a reality based in fantasy and wonder, one where storytelling thrives. There is also a sense of exploration I'd like to expand on when looking at these pages. My eyes feel like they've physically traveled this space after having looked for hidden objects.



I am less interested in each individual piece of the environment of the play, and more interested in the relationship between the pieces, creating for a set as a whole. While the set may be composed of many many small parts, focus can be easily drawn where needed if the small parts work better together. That's not to say there are many moments where the individual part becomes essential in driving the action of the story (i.e. shadow drop for whale, puppet show, Pinocchio's nose). The work of Louise Bourgeois compartmentalizes found objects in a unified way, and in such a fashion that reminds me of building blocks. For this production, in light of the intended audience, bright pops of color in an otherwise "unfinished/unpainted" world would give a visual sense of change and allow for focus in different areas.



The works of Ladislav Sutnar and MC Escher explore these same ideas in a different light, using two dimensions to compartmentalize and create a sense of scale.



The neutralization of objects through compartmentalized relationships brought me to a space one step further away from an unpainted set - a storage room. The potential energy I feel stored up in the beginning of the play is matched by the energy of being in the storage room of a theatre. While keeping the locale within the theatre, I believe a stage space that crosses over with a storage space allows for more scenic and directorial opportunities. Theatre storage can be messy, but chaos can be calmed when forms are repeated and movement is created. Unity is achieved, and focus can be drawn where needed.

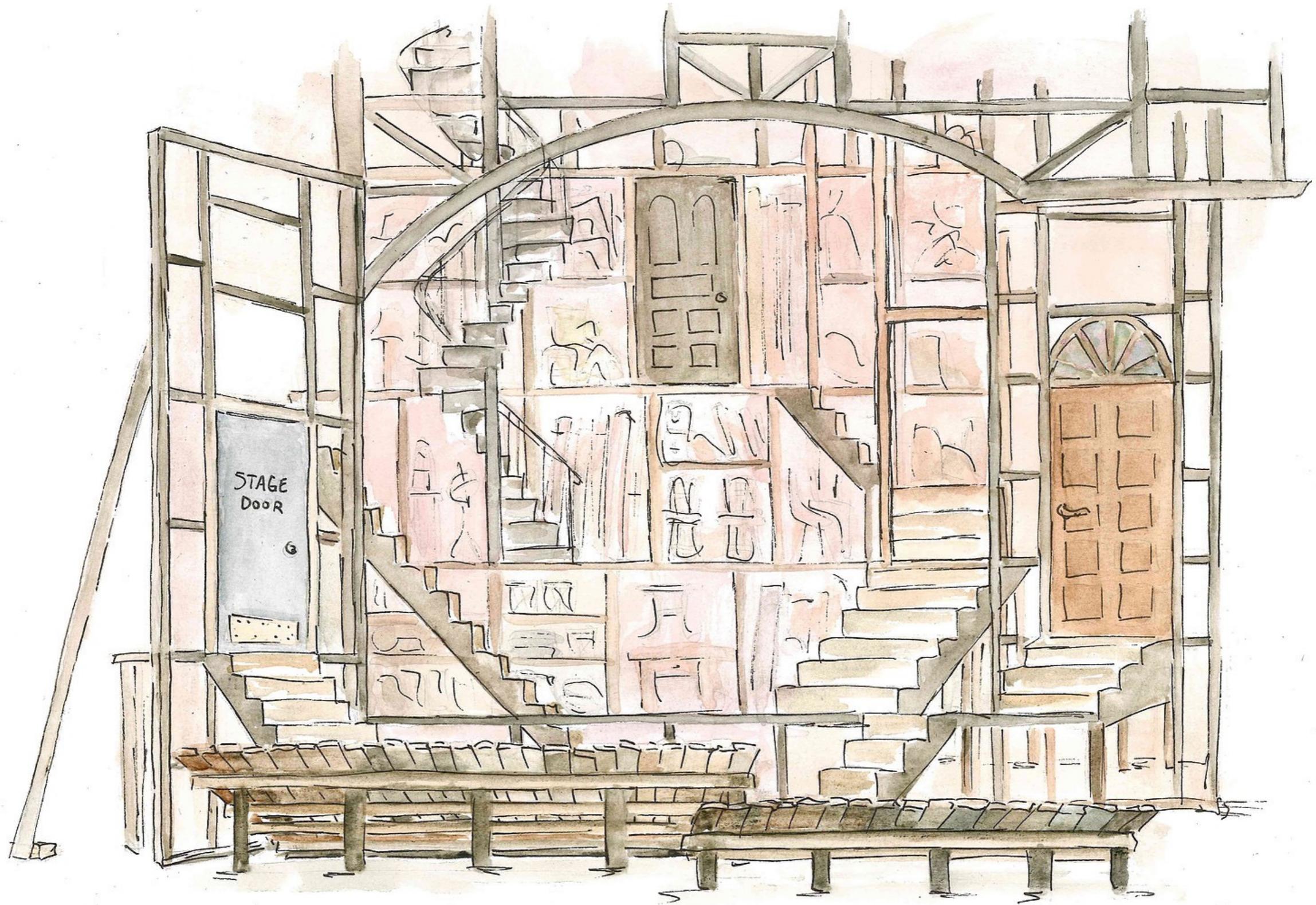


The quirks about all of these spaces are visually interesting and provide potential for isolated action and change of scene as actors move throughout the space.



Thinking about the larger picture, I began to imagine what might house this playing space, and feel strongly about the look of timber frame construction. It may allow for lots of creative space above what's happening on stage, encapsulating the stage and the house under one roof. I think the variety of shapes created with timber framing is playful, and fits within this show iconically with allusion to things like Gepetto's workshop, the schoolhouse, etc. While I'm not satisfied with the atmosphere the lighting in these images creates, I do feel like the following timber frame research images emphasize their uniqueness, and their adaptability to the stage.





Finally, I reference a rendering I did for a religion class, where a portion of the assignment was to create something under the parameters of dealing with 'hope' and 'the future'. My process delved into the sustainability of the theatre as an art in relation with changing society, and what I rendered was a scene of offering. A gesture of vulnerability is abstracted through a performance space based in the realm of a theatre storage room. From my sketchbook reads: "Storage - many entrances of past / Meeting place - brought to light - stage / Thrust off into existence - to audience / Complexity of inner workings / An offering." I see this thought process as a nice tie-in to the director's and playwright's intentions, and I feel ready to delve into the realm of design backed by these thoughts and images.