

# Green Initiatives in Scenic Design

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Final Project

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## WHAT PROMPTED THIS?

Many Americans are aware of climate change in the modern day setting, either illuminated by Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" (2006) or by inclusion in teaching plans at an elementary level. We are taught of the dangers of fossil fuels, water pollution, and deforestation on a grand scale. Most of the pressing ecological issues seem far bigger than us and our day-to-day sphere. In turn, many people don't take much action to prevent exacerbating the problems. We are told to walk more, turn off the lights, and recycle. That is the scope of our abilities and the changes we can make to prevent the destruction of our planet.

This seemed superficial to me, and in turn, I chose to take a look at how I can implement "green ideas & practices" in my work. I'm currently studying scenic design for theater, so I chose to inspect waste and misuse in theatrical design and building. Working at a scene shop this summer, I watched as we discarded hundreds of feet of plywood, dimensional lumber, and masonite as we progressed through our season. Upon returning to Emerson College this semester, I chose to enact practices of repurposing and recycling the materials used in the sets I designed and built. While I can only do so much to convince others of their actions, I can make dramatic change in my own waste output. This study focussed on three particular productions, but some of these materials have been reused in additional productions since.

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## LUMBER BREAKDOWN PER-SHOW

**This specific focus is on a series of student theater productions at Emerson College from 9/6/17 to 12/12/16.**

Below I have broken down each show by their design's needed lumber summary. This is by no means a representation of the student theater's total lumber usage for this semester.

### CLAUSTROPHILE

SET DESIGN: SEAN FRANK, JOE BURT

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost
Support Jacks (2' Base, 6' Brace, 8' Height)	30	\$ 2.90	\$ 87.00
Luan Sheets (1/4" x 4' x 8')	8	\$ 14.16	\$ 113.28
Framing Lumber (1x3", 8' Height)	23	\$ 1.45	\$ 33.35
Muslin Fabric (108" Height)	37	\$ 12.60	\$ 466.20
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 699.83</b>

### CHALK

SET DESIGN: JOE BURT

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost
Support Jacks (2' Base, 6' Brace, 8' Height)	10	\$ 2.90	\$ 29.00
Luan Sheets (1/4" x 4' x 8')	8	\$ 14.16	\$ 113.28
Masonite Sheets (3/16" x 4' x 8')	8	\$ 13.25	\$ 106.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 248.28</b>

### SURPRISE PARTY

SET DESIGN: SEAN FRANK

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost
Support Jacks (8' Height)	12	\$ 2.90	\$ 34.80
Framing Lumber (1x3", 8' Height)	13	\$ 1.45	\$ 18.85
Muslin Fabric (108" Height)	16	\$ 12.60	\$ 201.60
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 255.25</b>

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## SAVED MATERIALS:

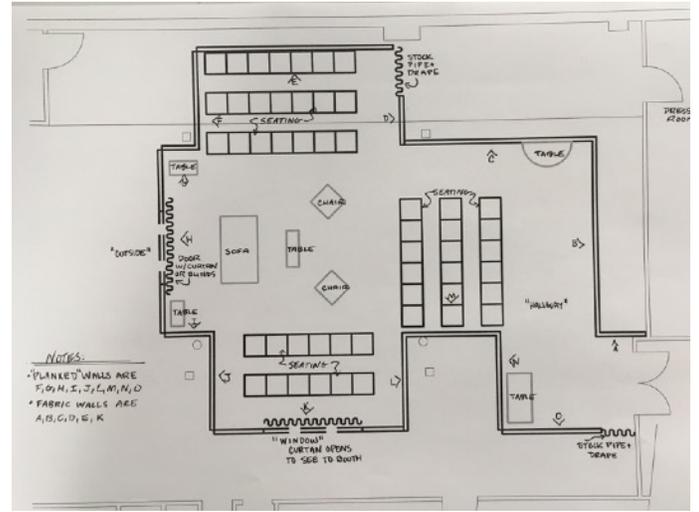
Material	Quantity Saved	Cost
Support Jacks (2' Base, 6' Brace, 8' Height)	352' of lumber	\$ 63.80
Lauan Sheets (1/4" x 4' x 8')	256 sq/ft	\$ 113.28
Framing Lumber (1x3", 8' Height)	104' of lumber	\$ 18.85
Muslin Fabric (108" Height)	48 yds	\$ 201.60

## CONCLUSION:

Even with using a limited lens to inspect the effects of “green design,” the results speak for themselves. It isn’t difficult to implement green initiatives into the design process, as scenic designers have many options ranging from using stock scenery to reusing materials. Stock scenery, such as platforms, flats, and jacks all operate as scenic design basics in which designs can build off of. Creative licensing shouldn’t take priority over waste output/green practices, but should work with it hand in hand. Designers should keep in mind what stock goods a theater has when designing there, and use that as a jumping off point. This principle was kept in mind in the three shows used as an example in this study, and it resulted in saving over 450’ of dimensional lumber.

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# CLIMATE CHANGE: SC-223-01

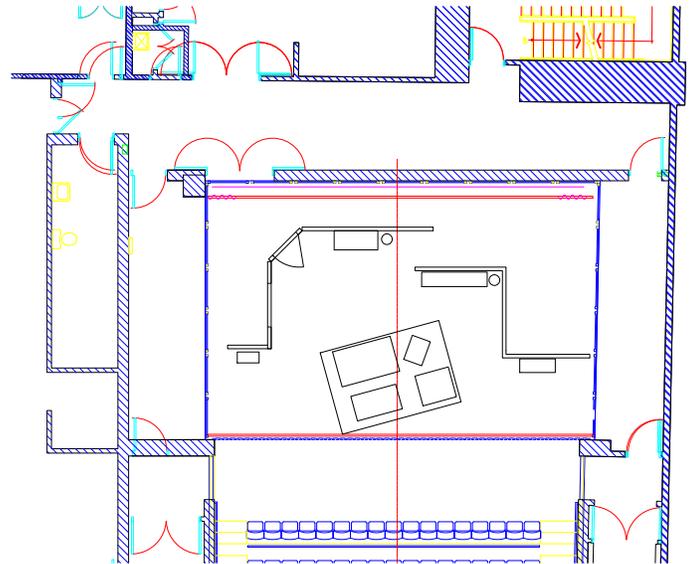


## Production Photos and Drafting

Claustrophile (above left/right)

Chalk (left)

Surprise Party (below left/right)



## REFERENCES FOR SCENIC DESIGNERS:

<http://www.broadwaygreen.com/portfolio/prepost-production/>

<https://www.centertheatregroup.org/programs/audiences/pre-and-post-show-engagement/>

<http://www.thegreentheater.org/web-sites-on-sustainability-in-theatre/>

## STOCK SCENERY:

“What is stock? Mr. Webster defines it as something “used or employed for constant service; kept in stock; as a stock size.” If we may define “in stock” as meaning “on hand” and “stock size” as a “standardized size,” we are close to a good definition for stock scenery. Indeed, stock scenery is designed with the specific goal of being able to keep it on hand and re-use it, thus gaining significant savings of time, money, and personnel.” (Stock Scenery Construction Handbook)

