

# Hyunjae Henry Cho

## Director Portfolio

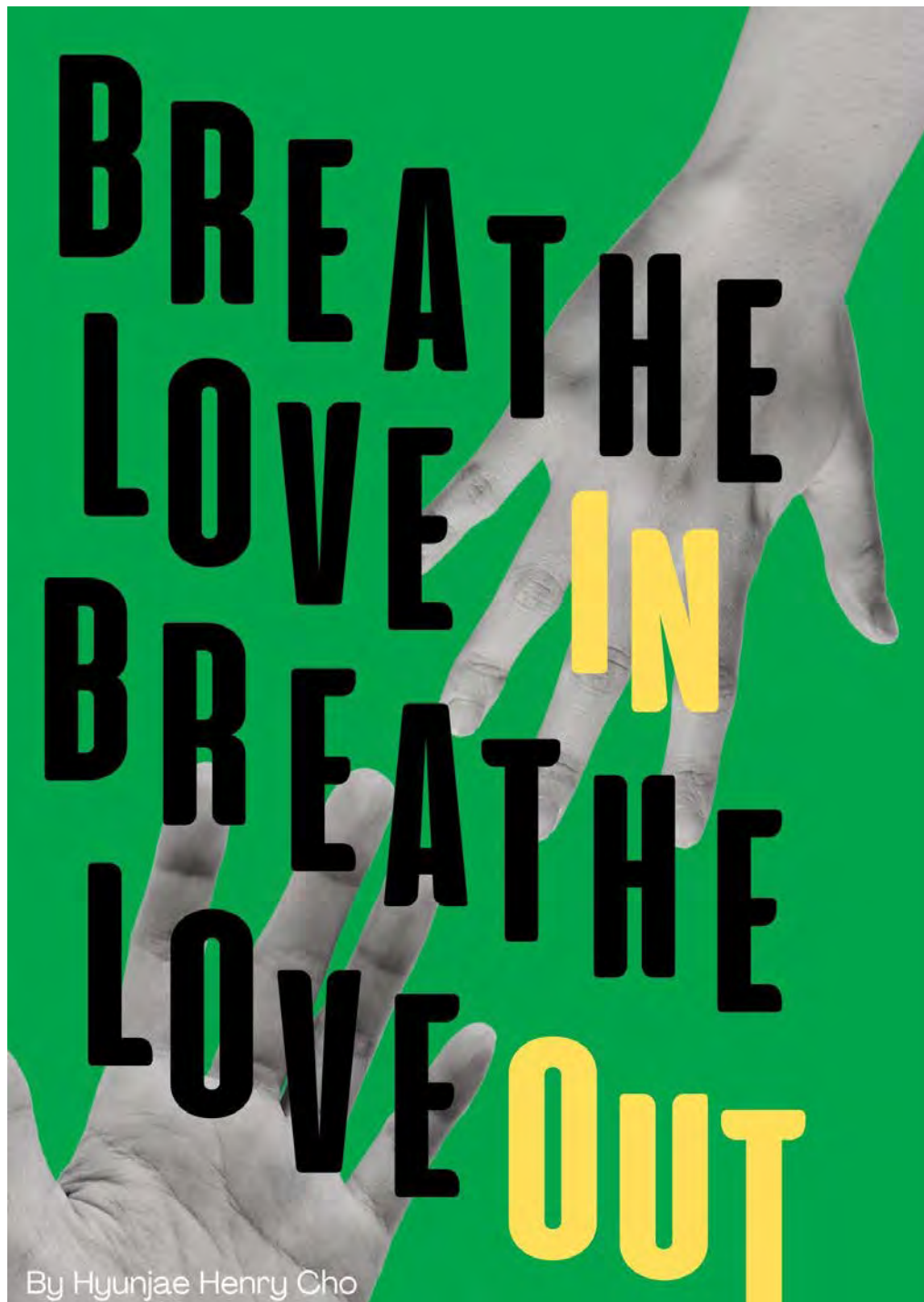
St. Paul's School  
(Concord, NH)

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# Performance Video

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VYZ2LKfsqXcv\\_6qEzZNwVsXRj\\_2Qs1ef/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VYZ2LKfsqXcv_6qEzZNwVsXRj_2Qs1ef/view?usp=sharing)



# Director Statement

I believe that a director's job is to give actors freedom to inhabit their characters as they understand them while gently guiding them toward a shared vision. I always want to see what actors have in mind before I try to direct them, a philosophy that came from assisting my school's theater director. A director needs a good eye but also needs to be able to develop mutual respect with their team of actors.

During the casting process, I do not focus solely on acting ability. I pay more attention to an actor's approach, asking them about their process to see what they are doing to understand where their character is coming from. What matters to me is their potential to become the character by the end of the rehearsal process. I ask actors to audition with multiple variations on a scene to see if the actor has simply memorized specific choices or if they are inhabiting the character and allowing their performance to breathe and change. Elizabeth, the main character in my recent show "Breathe Love In, Breathe Love Out," which I wrote, is an autistic teenager who is based on my real cousin, so I was very particular about the casting process. While other actors gave performances that felt like imitations, one actress, Yi, stood out as someone who had researched autism and created her version of an autistic teen. The characters in the play are Korean, so I was originally going to cast Korean actors, but even though Yi was Chinese and less experienced than some of the other actors who auditioned, I casted her because of her commitment.

We began the rehearsal process for "Breathe Love In, Breathe Love Out" with two table reads and three runs of the show, during which I gave the actors freedom to explore. I noted down the choices actors were making and thought about how to pull them together. Then I became more open about my vision for the show and provided them with a paper copy of the dramaturgy work. As we continued to run through the show, I guided the actors through questions such as "What does this line mean to you?" and "What is your goal at this moment?" that encouraged the actors to think and absorb rather than simply completing actions. Once the actors had discovered blocking patterns that made sense for them, I made minor adjustments or helped the actors notice moments when their actions didn't fit.

As a director, I prefer minimalistic sets because I believe it allows for greater focus on the characters' relationships and on the language. Therefore, while we had the option of designing a full set for the show, I instead decided to focus our budget on hiring a talented lighting designer and on renting our rehearsal space for a longer period of time in order to allow for a longer rehearsal process. I designed the show's minimalistic sets and decided that all we needed were an aging sofa, school chairs, and desks. To rent these props, I visited various prop houses in locations ranging from Long Island to Upper Manhattan to the Bronx, and I eventually settled on a perfect set of pieces. For one scene taking place in a car, we used two small chairs and a hand-held steering wheel.

To balance the minimalistic set, I emphasized lighting, working with a lighting designer(they/them) introduced to me by a professor who taught me at an NYU Tisch

production and design summer program. I shared my lighting ideas and design sketches with them, and we used lighting to create separate spaces onstage and take advantage of the stage's depth. A living room scene took place near the front of the stage, while for a more private scene with her daughter, Elizabeth's mother had to venture toward the back of the stage, transitioning from one thought space to another. The play centers on characters' very different thoughts and perspectives, and it is based on my own thoughts and perspectives about the whole story, so I wanted the scenes to take place in different thought bubbles across the stage. To achieve that effect, we used the lighting to create round edges. We also lowered the lights' brightness and opacity for intimate scenes, encouraging audiences to focus on the language.

I designed the costumes, creating a mood board and a design sketch for each actor and asking that actors bring suitable options from their personal wardrobes. I chose a specific color palette for each character. For Elizabeth I chose red, which fits her unique, powerful character. I chose stark black and white options for her emotionally distant father and pastel tones for her caring mother. For some children in the play with shy personalities, I chose simple, monochromatic outfits without patterns, while for their outgoing peers, I chose outfits with patterns and bright colors that spoke to them.

I also made specific choices regarding hair and makeup. I wanted minimal makeup to create an authentic look at an Asian American household. Early in the show, Elizabeth's hair is tied up tightly to reflect her father's control over her, but as the play continues, she loosens her hair to reflect the greater freedom she experiences and her ability to live as she chooses.

On opening night, I was very proud to see Yi's growth in becoming her own version of Elizabeth. Her performance wasn't like Elizabeth as I know her, but she had found her own compelling version of Elizabeth's story. I was also thrilled to hear audience members tell me that they had learned something new about autism and the struggles that come along with it. Even one of the child actors later told me that she hadn't known anything about autism before working on the play but was grateful to have learned so much about it. Moments like these are exactly what I had hoped for and what motivate me as a director.

# Blocking Script

**BREATHE LOVE IN, BREATHE LOVE OUT**  
by Hyunjae Cho

## Cast of Characters

ELIZABETH, eighteen-year-old Korean American high school senior

LILY, elementary school student

STACY, elementary school student

DAVID, Korean American father

RENEE, Korean American mother

ALICE, elementary school student in a wheelchair

VICTORIA, elementary school student

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Note: the actors playing the roles of Lily and Stacy in scene one can double as elementary school students in scene four.

The play takes in present-day America

SCENE 1

*(Lights up. ELIZABETH, 18, is a Korean American high school senior volunteering for her local library's afterschool class. Lily and STACY, two elementary school students, are seated at a table with notebooks open in front of them.)*

ELIZABETH

Okay, Lily, let's try spelling your favorite food. I always see you have this in your lunchbox!

Eli X to Li

LILY

An apple!

ELIZABETH

That's right, Lily! Good job! Now let's try writing it.

*(As Lily starts to write letters in her notebook)*

A...P...P...L...E...! Nice job, Lily! High five!

*(She gives Lily a high five.)*

How are your words coming, Stacy?

Eli ↻ X to SC

*(Stacy has put her head in her arms.)*

ELIZABETH

Why is your head on your desk?

STACY

I'm stupid.

ELIZABETH

Stupid isn't nice, Stacy. You shouldn't call anybody stupid, especially yourself.

Eli ↓

STACY

My sister says I'm stupid and I am... Lily can spell "apple," and I can't even spell "blue."

ELIZABETH

When I was your age, I couldn't spell "blue." I couldn't even spell "cat!"



STACY

Really?

*(DAVID, Elizabeth's Korean American father, enters unseen behind Elizabeth Stacy, and Lily. Uninterested, he pulls out his phone and looks at it.)*

ELIZABETH

Really! It took me a long time, and I wondered if it would ever happen. Sometimes it takes me a while to understand things. But eventually, I figure it out. Just keep going!

STACY

Okay, Miss Eli.

ELIZABETH

“Blue” is actually a pretty tricky word. Why don't we try something easier?

STACY

Okay. I really like you, Miss Eli. You're so nice.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Stacy! I like you, too.

STACY

How long have you been a teacher?

ELIZABETH

Well, I'm actually not a real teacher right now. I'm an assistant who works here at the library. But I'm applying to colleges right now so that I can become a teacher!

Eli ↑

Eli X to USR

*(This is the first thing that David seems to hear. He frowns and then clears his throat. Elizabeth turns and sees him.)*

ELIZABETH

*(Uncomfortable)*

Dad, you're here! Okay, Lily and Stacy, I need to go now. Your parents will be here soon, and if you have any other questions, you can ask Miss Holly over there.

DA ent USL

*(She points offstage.)*

STACY

Bye!

SC ex SL

Bye, Miss Eli!

Lily

Li ex SL

Okay... Let's go home.

DAVID

DA look @ Eli

Okay, Dad.

ELIZABETH  
*(Unenthusiastically)*

DA lead ex USL  
Eli follow.

*(Blackout.)*

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SCENE 2

Eli ent SL, DA follow.

*(Elizabeth and David cross to their car and sit inside.)*

Both ↓

How was work today?

DAVID

It was good.

ELIZABETH

I heard you talking about applying to colleges.

DAVID

*(Elizabeth doesn't respond. She begins chewing on one of her nails.)*

Eli, you know we've talked about this a million times.

DAVID

*(Elizabeth looks out the window.)*

Elizabeth, college is somewhere you're not going to succeed. Have you forgotten that you're autistic? You're different, and that means there are some things that you just can't do.

ELIZABETH

*(Doing her best to hide that she is shaking with anxiety)*

Nice haircut, Dad! It looks good on you.

DAVID

Focus, Elizabeth. Don't digress. What are these colleges you're applying to?

ELIZABETH

*(Rolling down the window and speaking to someone unseen outside the window)*

Hi, I like your dog!

DAVID

*(Speaking to the person out the window)*

I'm so sorry. My daughter isn't well.

*(He closes the window.)*

Dammit, Elizabeth! What have I said about talking to strangers?

DA look @ Eli

ELIZABETH

That dog was cute.

*(David hits the brakes. He and Elizabeth jerk forward in their seats.)*

DAVID

CUT IT OUT!

ELIZABETH

Alright...

DAVID

Tell me about these applications!

ELIZABETH

It's been going great! I'm writing my essays, and it's really interesting.

DAVID

*(Speaking sarcastically to himself)*

It's been going great. I'll bet.

*(To Elizabeth)*

Elizabeth, college will be too much for you! You're not going to be able to take care of yourself, let alone navigate life with other students, stay on top of your schedule...

ELIZABETH

Okay, okay! Stop yelling at me.

DAVID

I'm not yelling at you! I'm just trying to help you. And that's why I'm not going to support this fantasy. You're going to show me those applications, and you are going to delete them in front of me.

ELIZABETH

But Dad, I'm a pretty good teacher. Miss Holly at the library says that I'm talented.

DAVID

That's not real teaching, that's babysitting. You don't need to go to college for that. If you want to keep helping with kids sometimes, that's fine, but you're never going to be a real teacher.

*(Stopping the car)* We're home. Get your laptop and let's delete those applications.

*(Elizabeth runs out of the car. Blackout.)* Eli ↑, ex to SR

### SCENE 3

---

*(Lights up. Elizabeth sits in her room, her head on her desk. On the other side of the stage we see David sitting on the sofa and RENEE, Elizabeth's Korean American mother, on a chair.)*

RENEE

It isn't a fantasy, David! Elizabeth is much more capable than you think she is. You just can't handle that you might be wrong!

DAVID

What do you know? You stay home all day watching television. You have no idea what the real world is like!

RENEE

I don't live in the real world? You spend your whole life cooped up at your cubicle.

DAVID

How dare you say that after everything I do to put food on the table!

DA ↑

RENEE

Nobody is asking you to—

DAVID

I don't want to hear it, Renee! I'm sick of this!

DA ↓  
RE ↑, C ↻ X to CS

*(A door slams. After a moment, Renee walks up to Elizabeth's door and knocks.)*

RENEE

Elizabeth? Are you in there?

ELIZABETH

*(Her head still on her desk.)*

Yeah.

RENEE

Can I come in?

ELIZABETH

*(Unenthusiastically)*

Sure.

RENEE

*(Slowly opening the door)*

How's mama's girl doing?

RE X to Eli

ELIZABETH

Okay.

RENEE

*(Crossing to Elizabeth and playfully shaking her shoulders)*

We're going to have mac and cheese tonight. Aren't you excited?

ELIZABETH

Yay.

RENEE

Is there something wrong?

ELIZABETH

Where's Dad?

RENEE

He'll be back. He just needs his space—you know him.

ELIZABETH

*(Sighing)*

Oh. Okay.

RENEE

What's wrong?

ELIZABETH

*(Shouting, a nervous habit)*

Should I delete my college application?

RENEE

No—

ELIZABETH

*(Speaking quickly)*

I really don't know at this point. Maybe Dad's right, maybe I'm not good enough.

*(Shaking, she starts to pick at one of her fingers.)*

RENEE

Elizabeth, please, please don't say that to yourself. That's not true. I've read your essays, and they are so thoughtful. And you've not only been doing well in your classes this year, but you've also been so organized about getting recommendation letters from your teachers and staying on top of these college deadlines. That shows me that you are ready for college. I'm really proud of what you are doing.

RE ↓

ELIZABETH

Really?

RENEE

Yeah! And you are such a great teacher! I've seen how well you work with kids. The questions you ask them show how you really connect with them. That's a real talent. Not everybody has that gift.

ELIZABETH

*(Her eyes losing focus as her words become faster)*

I don't know, I don't know, I don't know...

RENEE

Close your eyes, Elizabeth. Breathe love in. Breathe love out...

*(Elizabeth closes her eyes. She begins to slow her breathing.)*

ELIZABETH

"Breathe love in, breathe love out."

*(She straightens in her chair.)*

"Feet on the floor, head up straight. I own my story. I own my story."

RENEE

The story is yours, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

The story is mine. I own my story no matter what.

RENEE

That's right. Picture the students in your library classroom. Do you think their lives would be the same without you? Do you think Miss Holly would be able to help all of them the way you have? Who is a student you helped today?

ELIZABETH

Well, I did help a girl named Stacy.

RENEE

What help did she need?

ELIZABETH

Her sister calls her stupid, and I told her that isn't true.

RENEE

See? Think about how those words probably helped her. And think about why she trusted you enough to tell *you* about something like that. There are so many Stacys out there who need a teacher like you.

ELIZABETH

RE ↑

RE ↓

*(Opening her eyes.)*

Do you think Dad's life is better off because I'm in it?

RENEE

Of course! You've brought him so much joy. Your dad loves you very much. He just expresses his love by worrying about you even though there's no real reason to worry. He's been so busy at work that he hasn't gotten to see how much you have grown. He still sees you as a kid, and you're not. You're a young woman.

RE ↑

ELIZABETH

He just doesn't want me to apply to college because he doesn't want to pay for it.

RENEE

That's not true.

ELIZABETH

But what if he doesn't help pay for me? I don't know that I can afford to go on my own.

RENEE

Don't worry about that right now. Even if that were true, which it won't be, we would have options.

ELIZABETH

Okay.

RENEE

Just push through! You can do it!

ELIZABETH

Thanks, Mom.

*(Blackout.)*

RE ex to SR, look @ Eli

SCENE 4

*(Lights up. It is several months later. Renee is on her phone waiting to leave a voicemail.)*



RENEE

Hi, David... I hope the move to Atlanta went well. I found some of your things in the garage, so if you would like me to send those to you, let me know your new address. Umm... I'm not leaving this message expecting a reply, but I just wanted to share some news. (*Fighting back*

RENEE (*cont'd*)

*tears*) Well, umm, she got in. She got in... She got into St. Joseph's as an education major. I am extremely proud of her, and I hope you are, too. I'll be helping her pay for tuition, and she is going to work on campus. So... if you would like to contribute, that would certainly be helpful. But it's your choice. I'm not going to pressure you anymore—it's just if you want to... Well, I hope you're... well. Bye.

(*Blackout.*)

## SCENE 5

---

(*Lights up. Nine years have passed. We are in Elizabeth's elementary school classroom. Elizabeth is standing in front of a number of ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS who are sitting at their desks. As an art project, they are creating paper butterflies. On the back wall is a board with a large picture of a garden. At the top are the words "Our Garden." In one corner of the classroom, ALICE, a student, is sitting unhappily in a wheelchair.*)

ELIZABETH

Alright, that's all for today. Once you've finished coloring your butterfly, you can place it wherever you want in our "garden."

(*Students rush to the back of the classroom to tape their butterflies to the wall and then start filing out of the door. One of the students, VICTORIA, runs up to Elizabeth.*)

VICTORIA

Do you have any vanilla cupcakes, Miss Eli? My butterfly is hungry.

ELIZABETH

I think maybe *you* want a vanilla cupcake, Victoria.

Eli X to VI

Eli ↓

VICTORIA

No...

ELIZABETH

Well, we don't have any cupcakes left. Maybe I can bring one for your butterfly tomorrow?

VICTORIA

*(Already running to the wall)*

Sure! My butterfly says she likes sprinkles, too.

VI↑, ex to SR

ELIZABETH

Got it!

Eli↑

*(Victoria leaves. Alice is the only student left. She's looking dejectedly at her butterfly.)*

ELIZABETH

Okay, it's time to go, Alice!

Eli X to AL

*(Alice doesn't respond.)*

ELIZABETH

Are you ready to hang up that butterfly?

ALICE

I don't want to.

ELIZABETH

Why not?

*(She notices the crumpled up butterfly on Alice's desk.)*

Oh no, why is your butterfly crumpled up?

ALICE

It doesn't belong in the garden. It belongs in the trash.

ELIZABETH

Why do you think that, Alice?

ALICE

My butterfly doesn't have wings.

ELIZABETH

Eli ↓

What happened to its wings?

ALICE

*(Shrugging)*

They fell off.

ELIZABETH

It looks like somebody tore them off.

ALICE

No. They just fell off. That sometimes happens with butterflies, and there's nothing anyone can do about it.

ELIZABETH

Okay. Well, why can't the butterfly go in the garden with the other butterflies? Maybe it can sit on one of the flowers.

Eli ↑

ALICE

No. It's different than the other butterflies, and they might laugh at it.

ELIZABETH

Why might they laugh at it?

Eli ↓

ALICE

I don't know. They just do.

*(Beat.)*

ELIZABETH

Alice, I'd like to teach you something special.

ALICE

*(Unsure)*

Okay.

ELIZABETH

These are magic words someone taught me. Do you want to hear them?

ALICE

Yeah.

ELIZABETH

Close your eyes.

Eli ↑

*(Alice closes her eyes.)*

ELIZABETH

Head up straight. Imagine that the air around you is filled with love. Breathe that love in. Breathe that love out. Breathe love in, breathe love out. Can you repeat that for me?

ALICE

I don't know.

ELIZABETH

Trust me. Breathe love in, breathe love out.

ALICE

Breathe love in, breathe love out.

ELIZABETH AND ALICE

Breathe love in, breathe love out. Breathe love in, breathe love out.

Eli ↓

ELIZABETH

It sounds like this butterfly is facing some real challenges. But I think this butterfly is strong. It may not have wings, and maybe some of the butterflies will laugh sometimes, but that doesn't have to stop the butterfly from joining the garden. There are all kinds of butterflies in there.

*(Crossing to the butterfly wall)*

I see butterflies that are different colors and that have different patterns. I see one that's upside down. In the end, what matters for these butterflies is how much they love who they are. Each of them is telling its own beautiful story. Imagine your butterfly saying, "I own my story. I own my story."

Eli ↑

ALICE

"I own my story."

ELIZABETH

Good. Breathe love in, breathe love out.

ALICE

Breathe love in, breathe love out.

ELIZABETH AND ALICE

Breathe love in, breathe love out.

*(Blackout. End of play.)*

both look to SR

# Costume Design

# Costume Design Mood Board

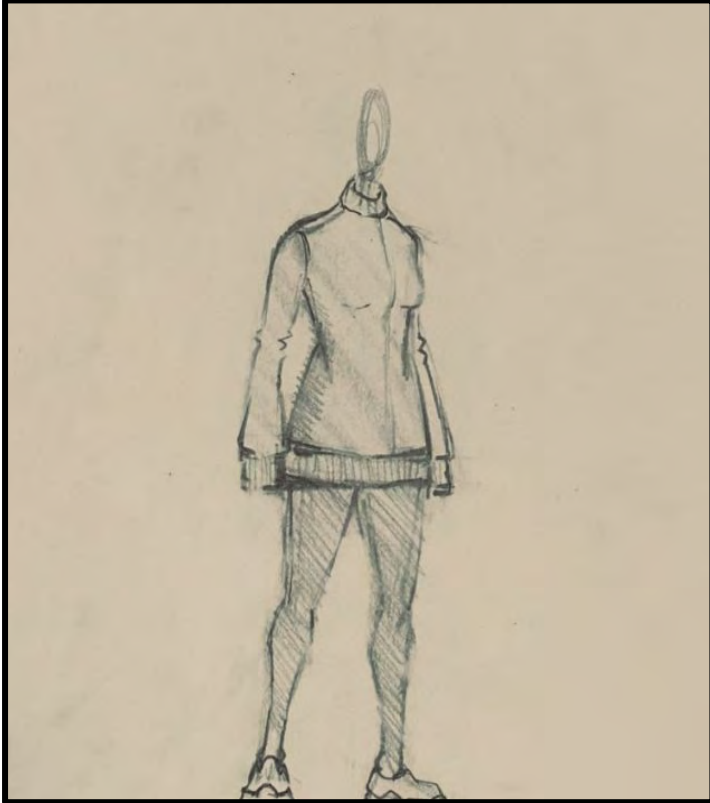
Character: Elizabeth



Design Keywords : Red, Unique, Compassionate, Hopeful

# Costume Design

Character: Elizabeth



## Personality Traits:

- **Caring:** Considerate of the wellbeing of others, especially the children she teaches.
- **Compassionate:** Has the ability to empathize with others, putting the needs of others above her own.
- **Resilient:** Despite her fragility, she demonstrates inner strength, finding ways to keep going.
- **Fragile:** Struggles with self confidence and is deeply affected by others' opinions, particularly her father's criticism.
- **Anxious:** Exhibits nervous habits like nail biting and quick speech when under lack of confidence.
- **Hopeful:** Believes in a better future for herself and others.

## Costume Details:

- A red sweater to symbolize warmth, vulnerability, and the passion she carries under her fragility.
- Casual but neat sweatpants or leggings for practicality.
- **Shoes:** Aged sneakers to reflect her grounded and approachable nature.
- **Accessories:** A necklace and small bracelet showing her sensitive and emotional depth.



# Costume Design MoodBoard

Character: Renee



Design Keywords: Pastel, Calm, Strong, Empathetic, Practical

# Costume Design

Character: Renee



## Personality Traits:

- **Optimistic:** Maintains a positive point of view even through financial and emotional challenges.
- **Strong Willed:** Although soft spoken, she defends Elizabeth's potential and passion.
- **Patient:** Has immense patience, both with Elizabeth's struggles and David's stubbornness.
- **Supportive:** Encourages Elizabeth to pursue her dreams, standing against David's opposition.
- **Empathetic:** Understands Elizabeth's struggles and offers thoughtful advice.
- **Nurturing:** Fosters a safe and warm environment, acting as a refuge for Elizabeth during tough times.

## Costume Details:

- Light Blue (soft color) shirt, showing her nurturing spirit and comforting presence.
- Practical, wide fitted khaki knee length shorts to balance functionality and elegance.
- Dark color apron, showing her firm spirit in protecting her daughter.
- **Accessories:** Modest and meaningful jewelry, wedding ring, small earrings to reflect her endless love and devotion.

# Costume Design MoodBoard

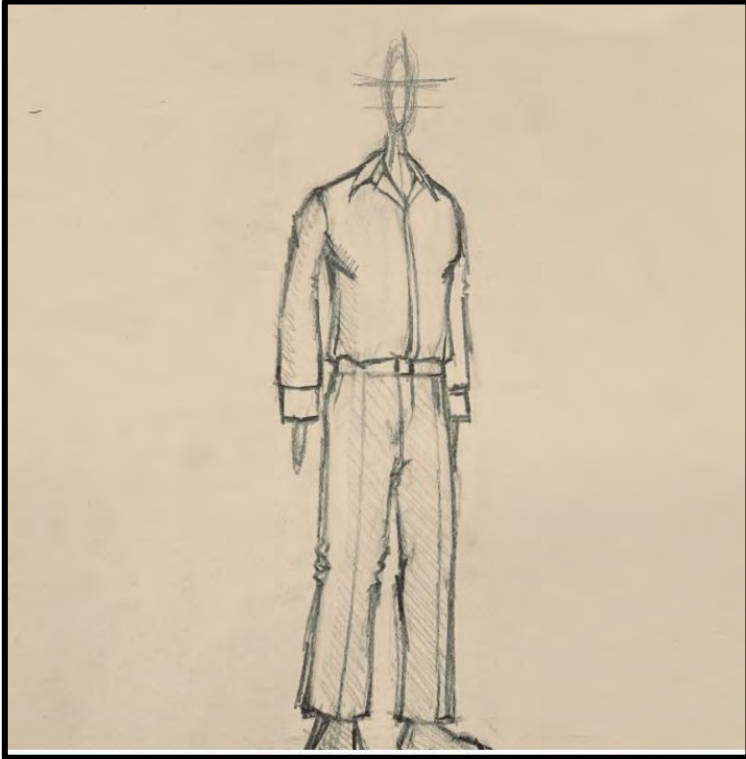
Character: David



Design Keywords: Dark, Business, Dandy, Authoritative, Cold

# Costume Design

Character: David



## Personality Traits:

- **Authoritative:** Takes on the role of decision maker, often dismissing opposing opinions.
- **Protective:** Believes he is protecting Elizabeth by setting limitations, though it manifests as control.
- **Pragmatic:** Views life through a practical lens, failing to agree with emotional or aspirational ideas.
- **Stubborn:** Finds it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances, particularly regarding Elizabeth's growth and abilities.
- **Emotionally Reserved:** Struggles to openly express love and vulnerability, relying on harsh words to convey concern.
- **Insecure:** Beneath his confidence lies an anxiety about his own limitations in financially supporting his family.

## Costume Details:

- Dark, structured business attire, button-up shirt with dress pants, emphasizing his authority.
- Muted tones like black and white to reflect his conservative approach.
- **Accessories:** A simple black leather belt and a watch to show his structured and cold personality.
- **Shoes:** Polished dress shoes, showing his commitment to professionalism.

# Set Design

# Set Design Moodboard

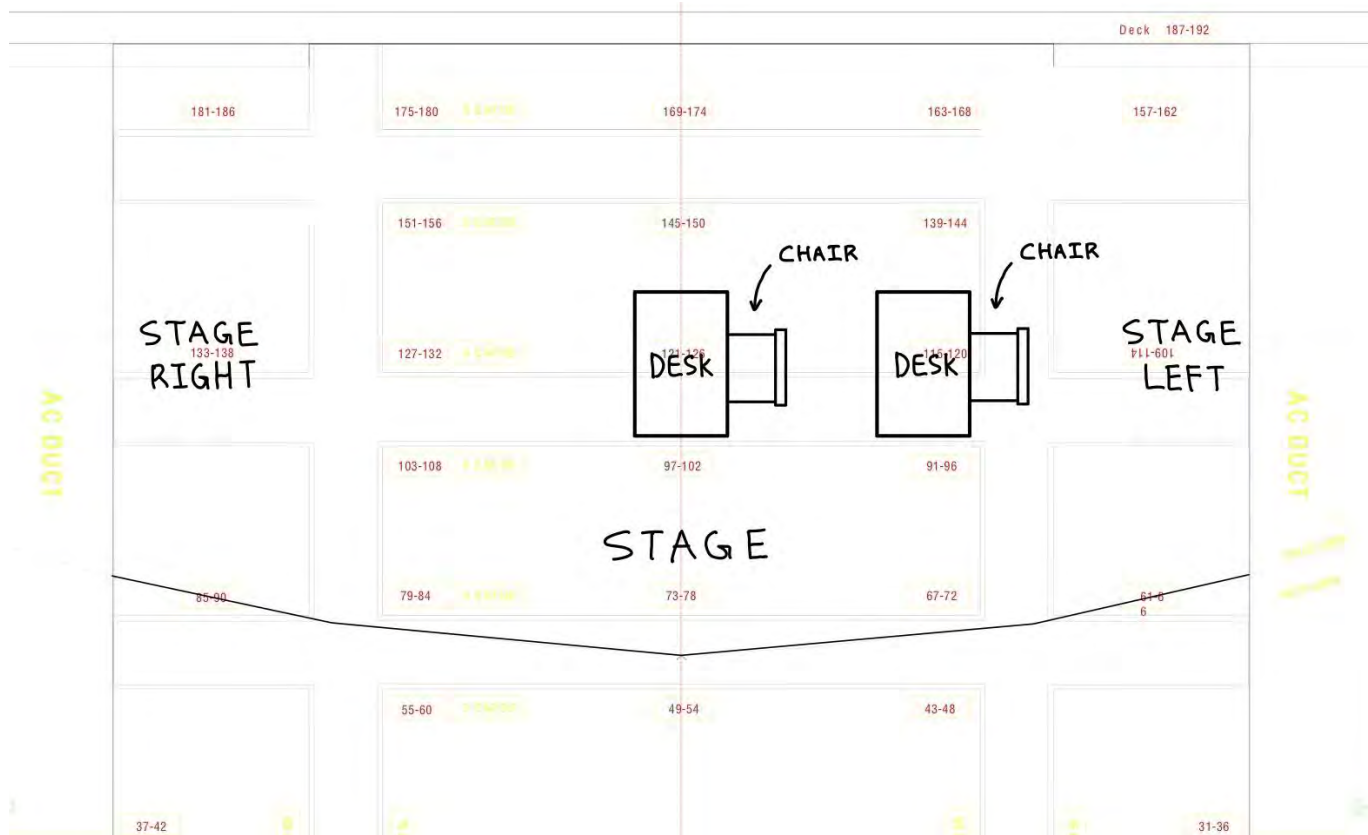


Design Keywords: Open, Memory, Plain, Minimalistic, Brain

# Set Design

## Scene 1

Design



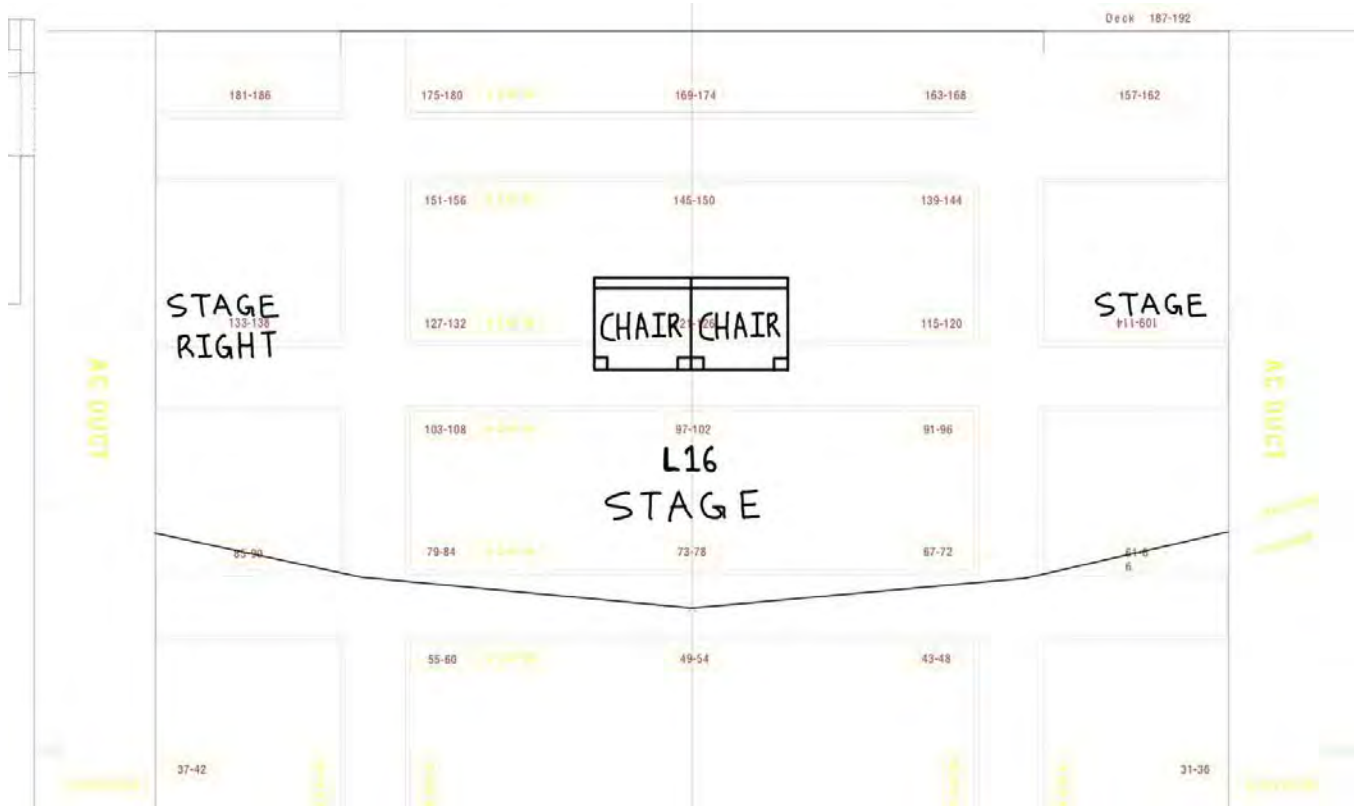
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# Set Design

## Scene 2

**Design**



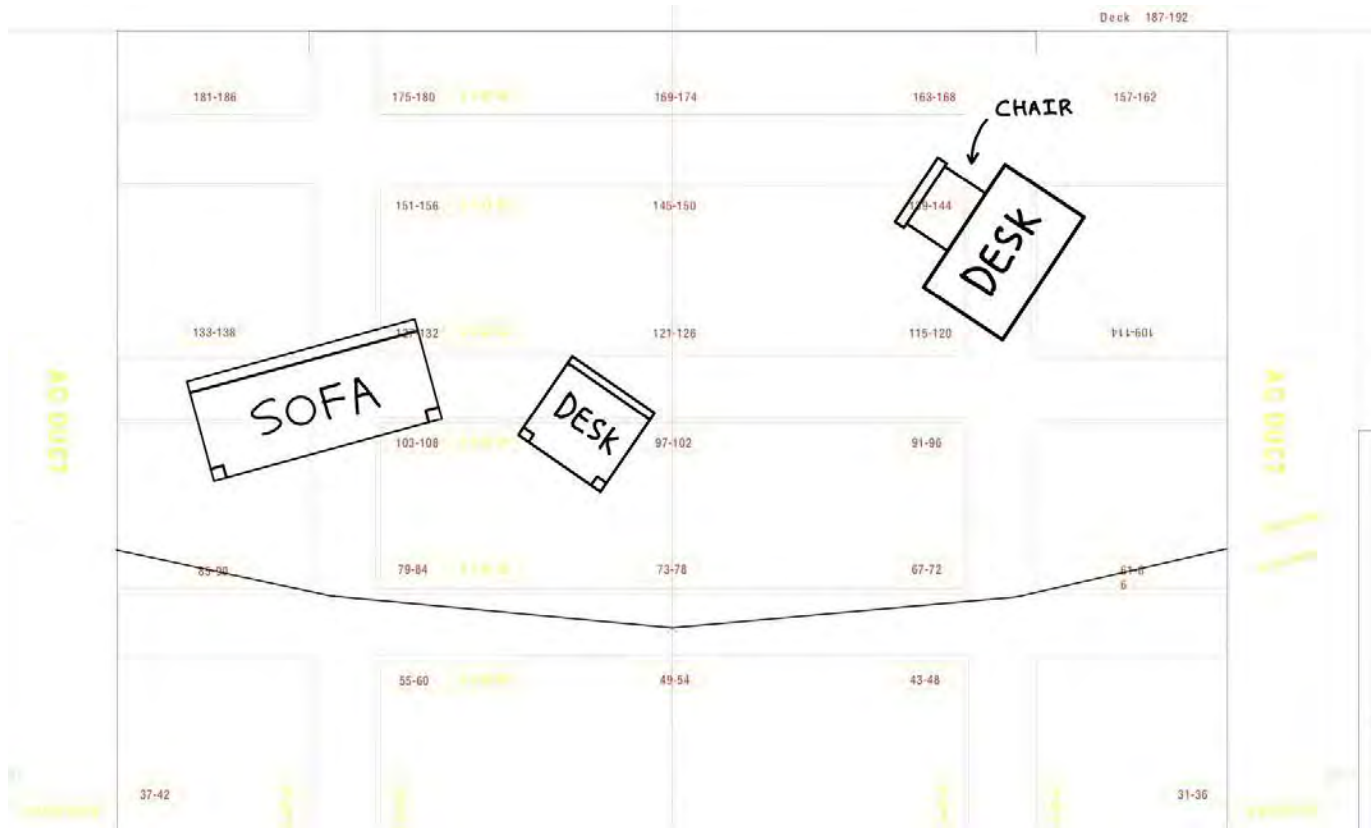
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# Set Design

## Scene 3



**Design**

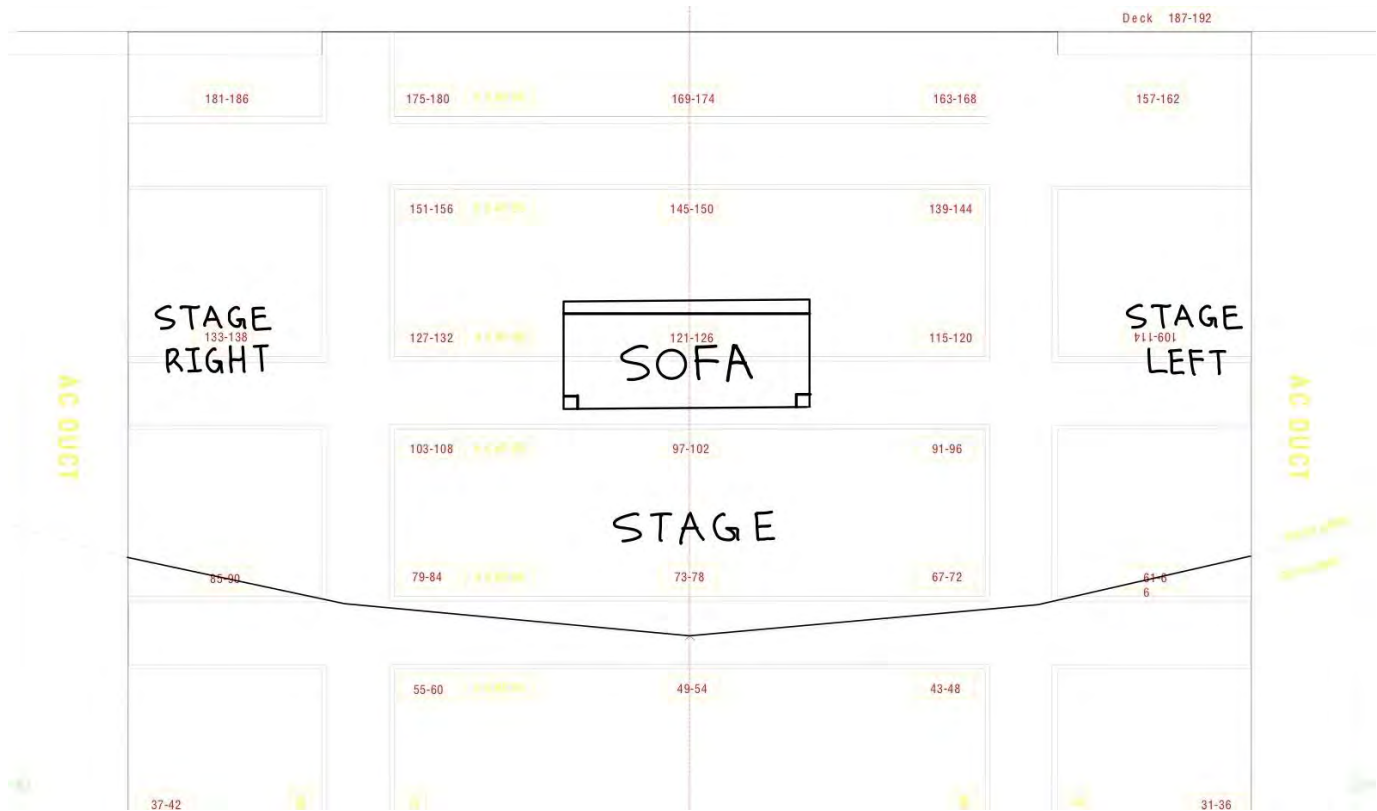


**Product**

# Set Design

## Scene 4

Design

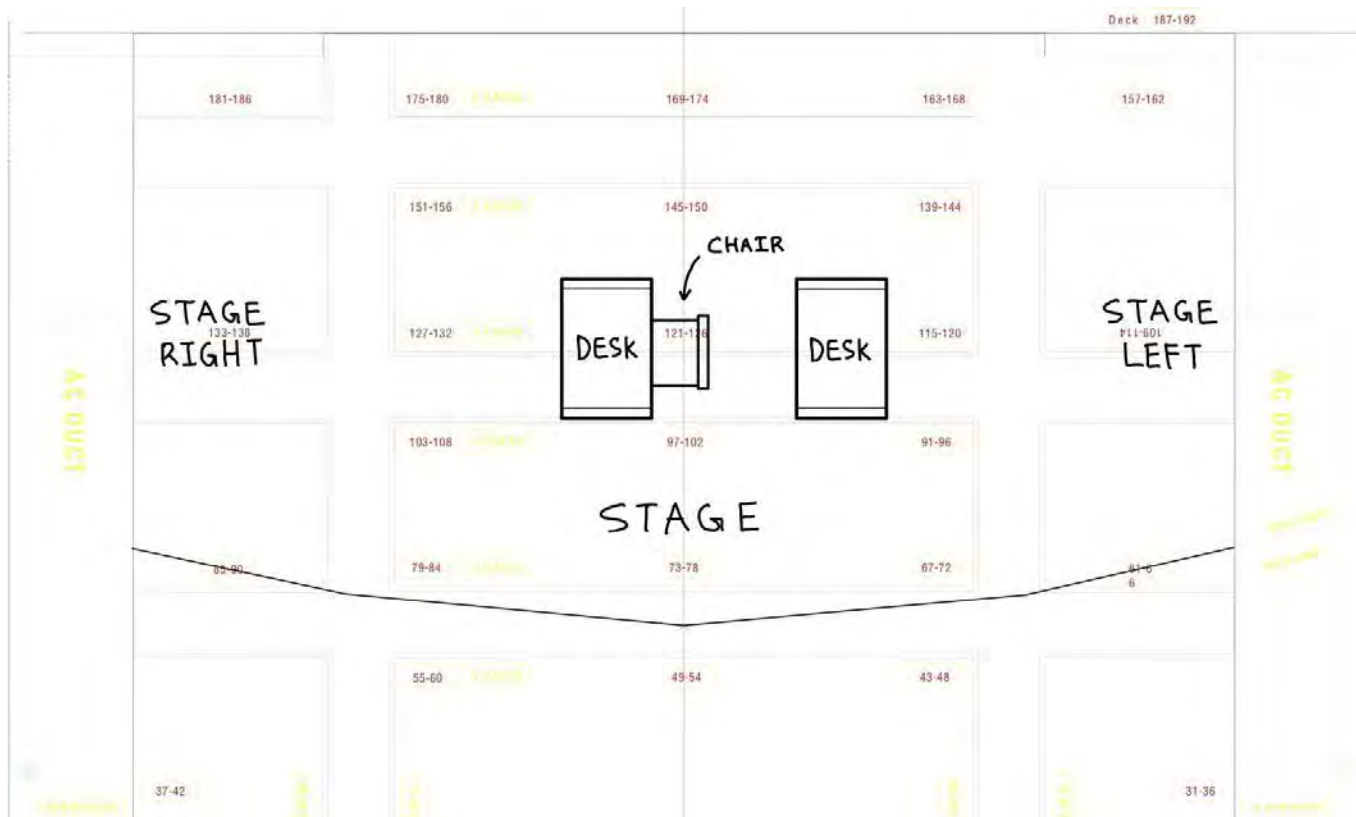


Product



# Set Design

## Scene 5



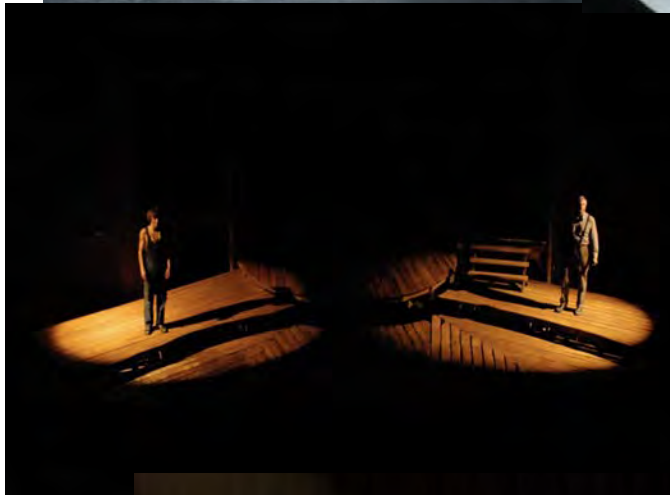
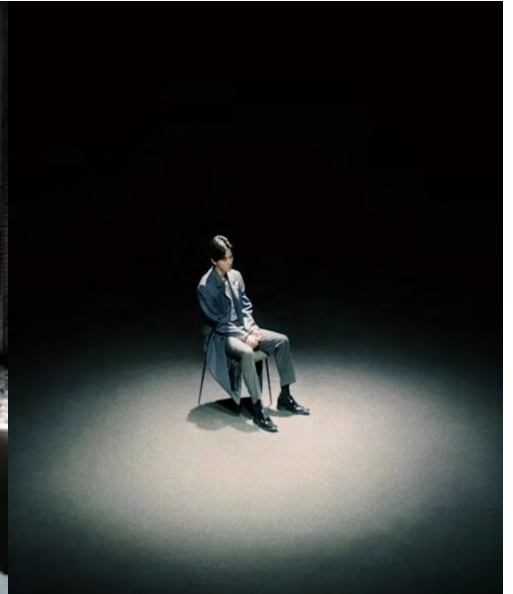
**Design**



**Product**

# Lighting Design

# Lighting Design Moodboard



Design Keywords: Focused, Dark, Dreamlike, Memory, Time

# Lighting Design

Light Intensity



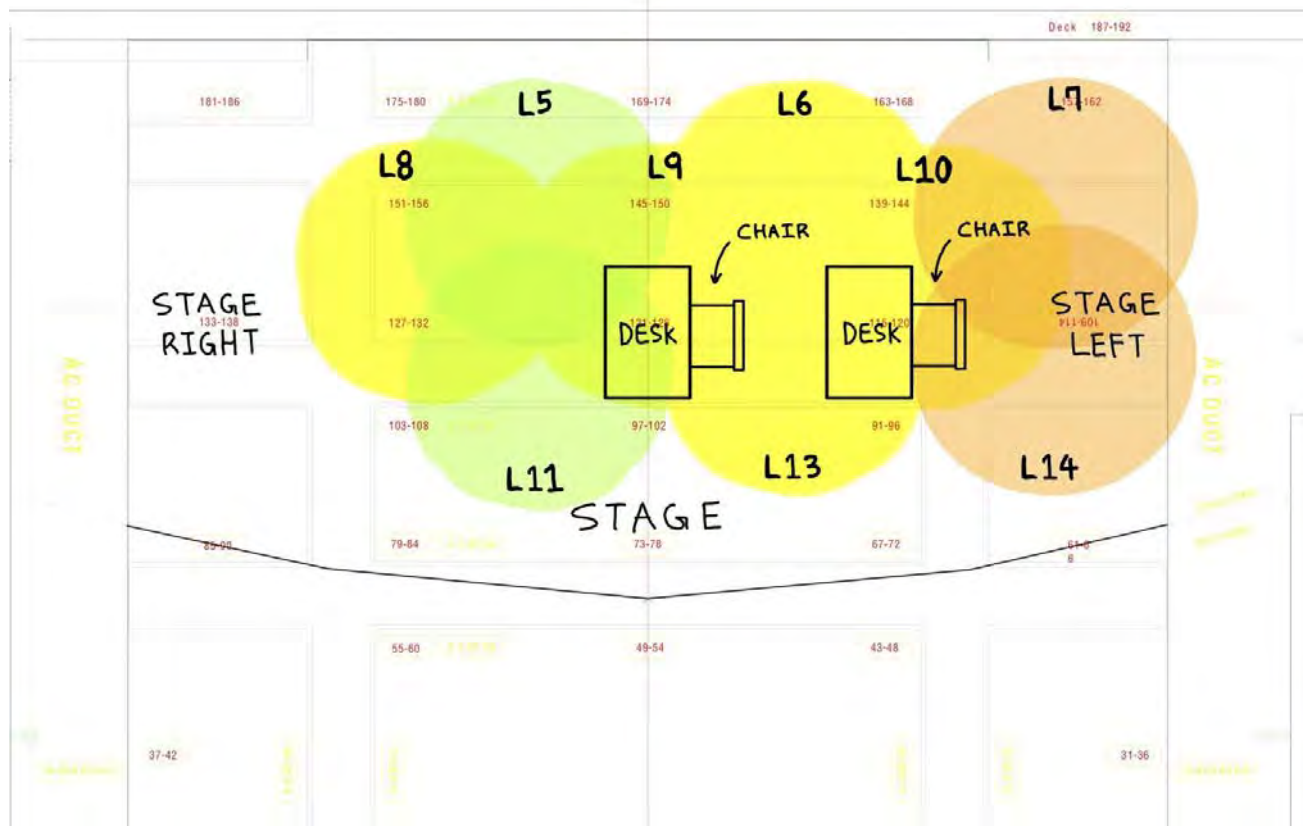
Scene 1

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31%~60%

61%~100%

Sketch



Product



# Lighting Design

## Scene 2

Light Intensity



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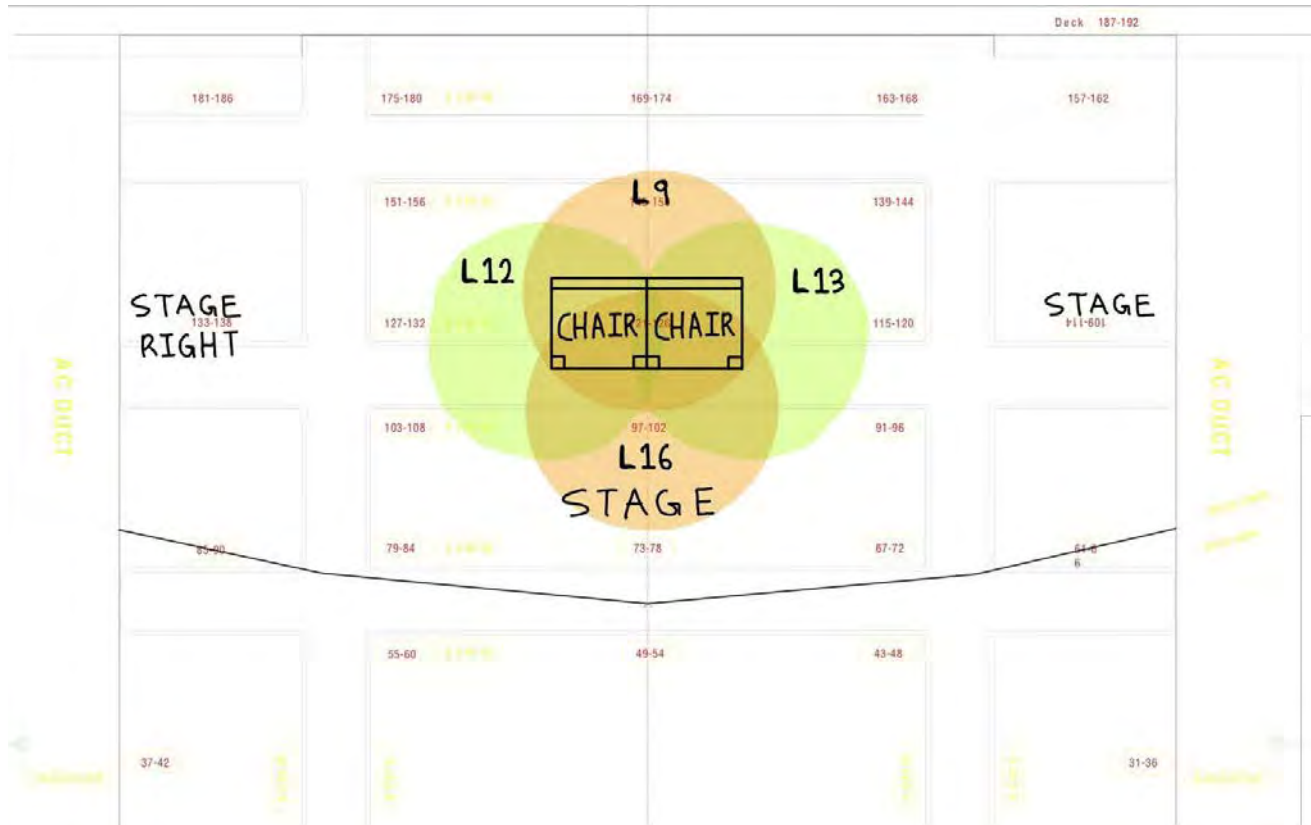


31%~60%



61%~100%

Sketch



Product



# Lighting Design

Scene 3 - 1

Light Intensity



0%~30%

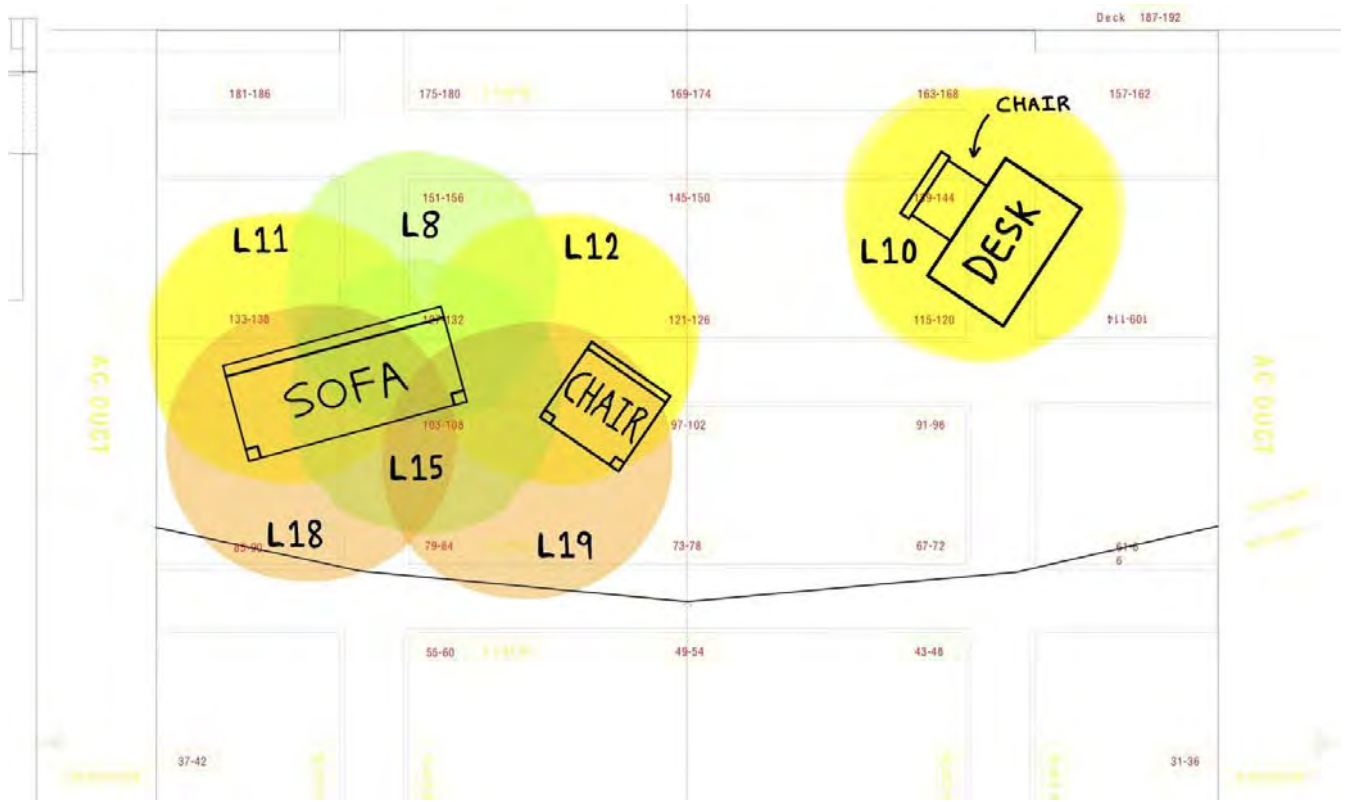


31%~60%



61%~100%

Sketch



Product





# Lighting Design

Light Intensity



0%~30%



31%~60%



61%~100%

Scene 3 - 2

Sketch



Product



# Lighting Design

Light Intensity



0%~30%



31%~60%



61%~100%

Scene 4

Sketch



Product



# Lighting Design

Scene 5 - 1

Light Intensity



0%~30%

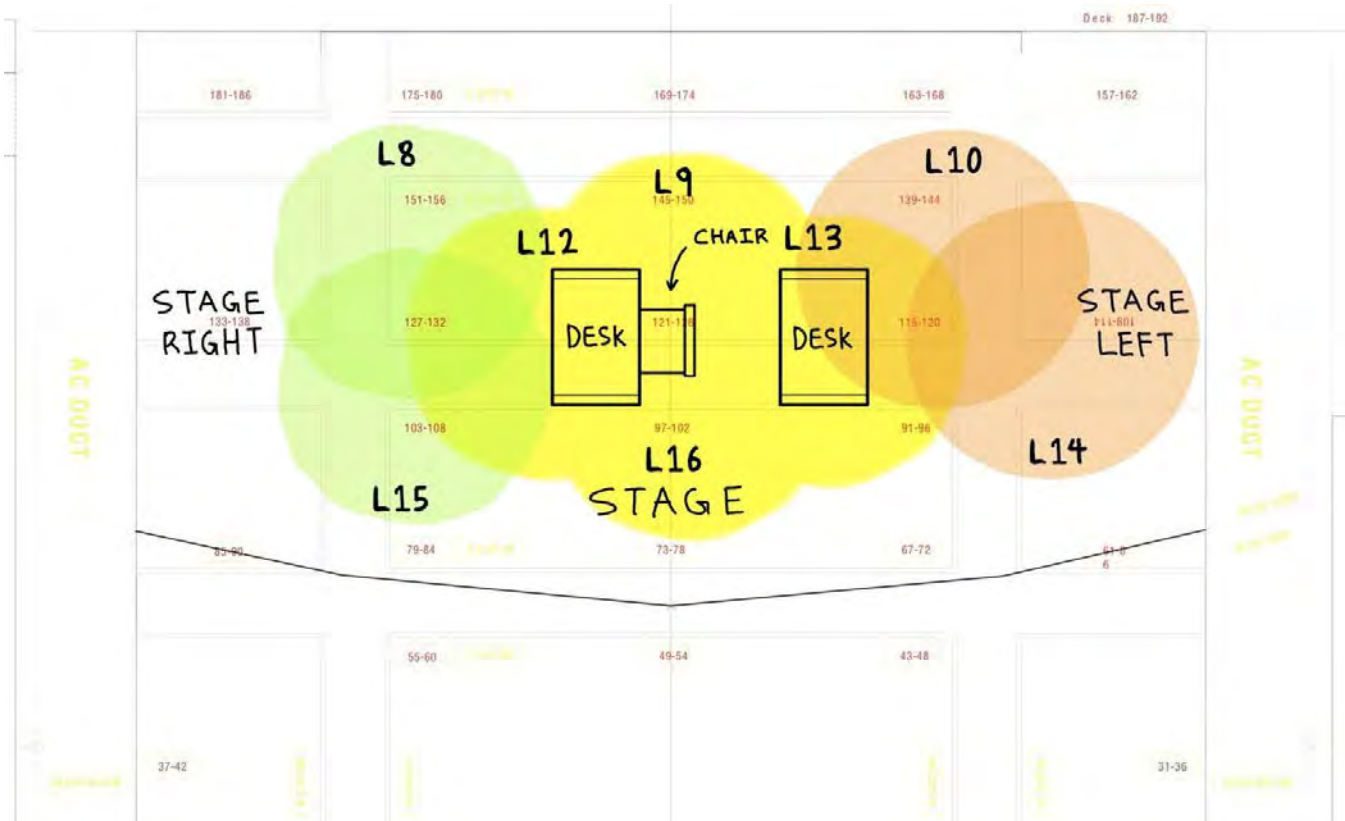


31%~60%



61%~100%

Sketch



Product



# Lighting Design

Scene 5 - 2

Light Intensity



0%~30%

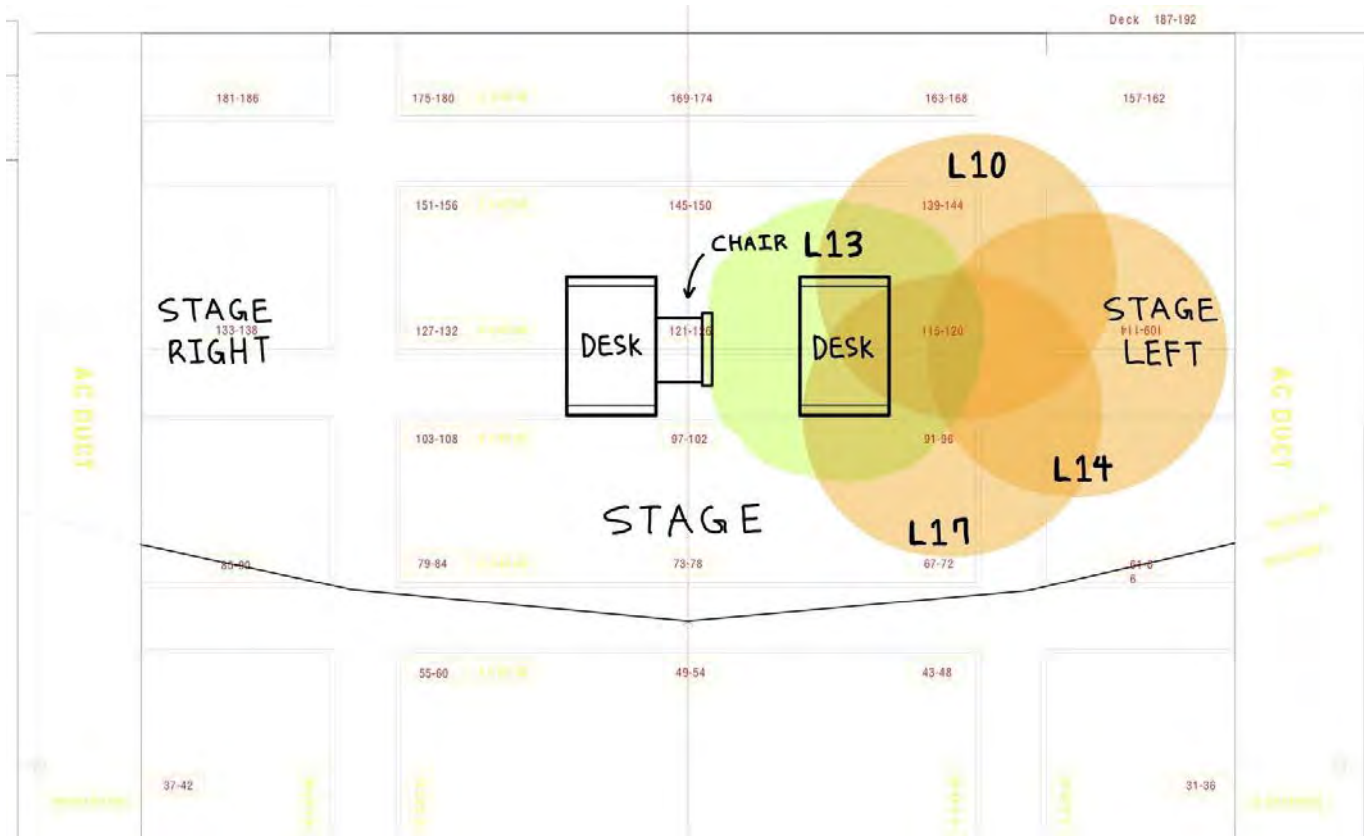


31%~60%



61%~100%

Sketch



Product



# Behind the Scenes/Rehearsal

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hLBG157dPYNberfcBQ82wCH-Afv3Pnt9/view?usp=sharing>

