



Grecian Dionnystic Mask

THE THEATRICAL DESIGN OF MASK

MAX LEVITT



Masks of W.T. Benda

Objective: To understand the philosophy of Mask Design

USITT (The United States Institute of Theater Technology) opened my eyes to theater in which the mask creates everything about the character, and plays and performances were created specifically to amplify the power of these masks.

The mask designer and creator that was closely examined at USITT was W.T. Benda.

Being exposed to such ideals of mask hurtled me into the first stages of my designs.



Golden Beauty Mask
W.T. Benda

In order to facilitate the design and creation of my masks I added specificity to my task.

I was to design my masks specifically for the show "Oleanna" by David Mamet, as if it were both an opera and a ballet.

W.T. Benda made me think of masks that dealt in beautiful pieces of art. So I turned to artistic ideas of the human face.



These are some of the sketches that evolved out of Oleanna and W.T. Benda's works of beauty.

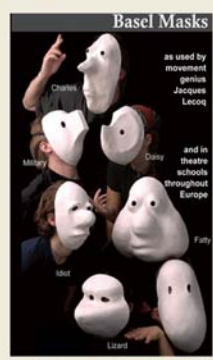
I focused my energies into completing Mamet's idea that his characters were titans fighting wars, rather than humans squabbling.

The Funding from CURCA allowed me to get first hand looks at W.T. Benda's masterpiece masks. His grandson was in attendance and with a professor from his school they put on an incredible presentation of his techniques and finished masks.

His technique for Mask Design and construction was very unique as it dealt in unexacts. He created using a paper mache technique on a wire base without the dimensions of a human face.

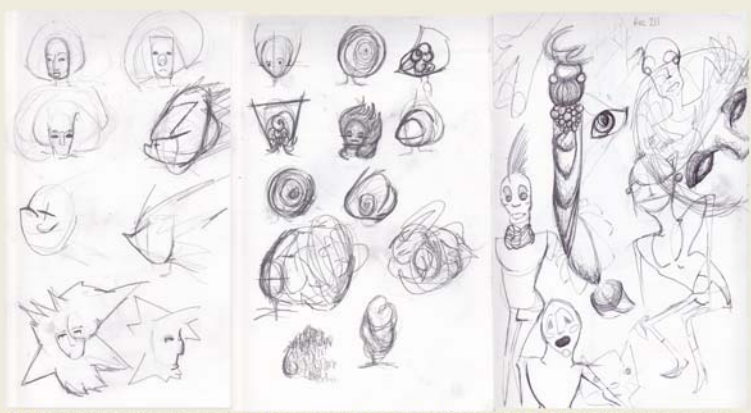
After reviewing my first set of renderings and sketches, I realized that they did not "feel" right for the show.

My trip to USITT had opened up a passion for mask and luckily it coincided with UB offering a class on Acting in the Mask. New ways to continue the development of my masks practically fell into my lap.



Jacques Lecoq used a larval form of mask called the Basel Mask in order to teach acting in a false face.

Each of these have a very simple shape and form, but can project a very wide range of emotion.



While learning how to use a mask on stage, with the help of some wonderful professors, I came to the realizations that my renderings had lacked volume and unique form.

I experimented with doing drawings that were gestural, and in higher quantities in order to discover my mask, instead of deciding immediately on the solution.

The third page is a series of very rough sketches, but upon looking back I realized within that page I had done my best experimental work.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS: Even Simplicity is Complex
Creating something that appears simple in shape and form can be an incredibly complex task.



Lion King Mask and Puppetry



Noh Theater Masks