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Birth By Sleep: An Immersive Adventure through Wonderland

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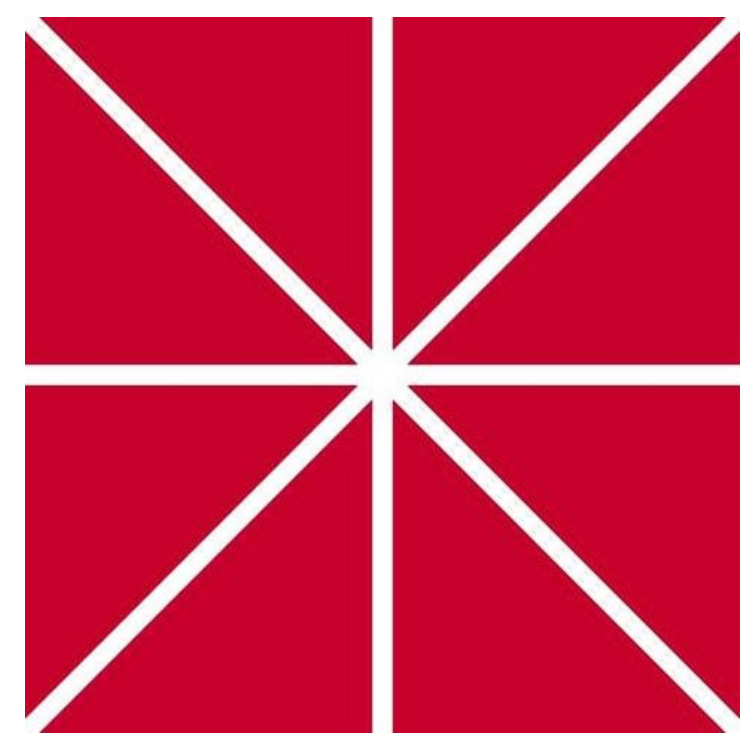
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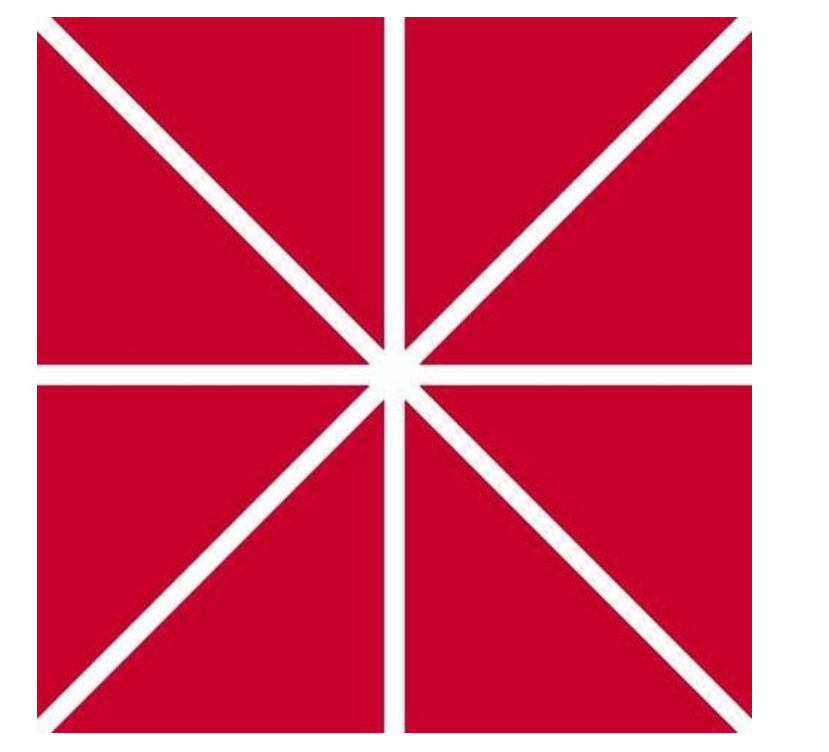
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Birth By Sleep: An Immersive Adventure through Wonderland

Edd Bass with Dr. Jocelyn L. Buckner, Chapman University Department of Theatre



What is Immersive Theatre?

My goal is to conceptualize an immersive theatre piece. Immersive Theatre is a form that has just recently started to gain popularity. In order to create an immersive theatre piece one needs to understand it. It's goal is to place the audience in another world. The audience is given the freedom, or illusion of freedom, to explore the world as they please, integrating with it and it's inhabitants. Ultimately though, the audience can have no lasting effects on the world; they cannot change it, they are merely guests. This form of theatre elicits a strong response because it allows for a more natural viewing of the world. One cannot see everything, they turn the corner and there is something happening, they didn't get to see how it started and it's their choice if they see how it ends. This closeness to reality seems to produce a more visceral, true, and long-lasting reaction to the art.



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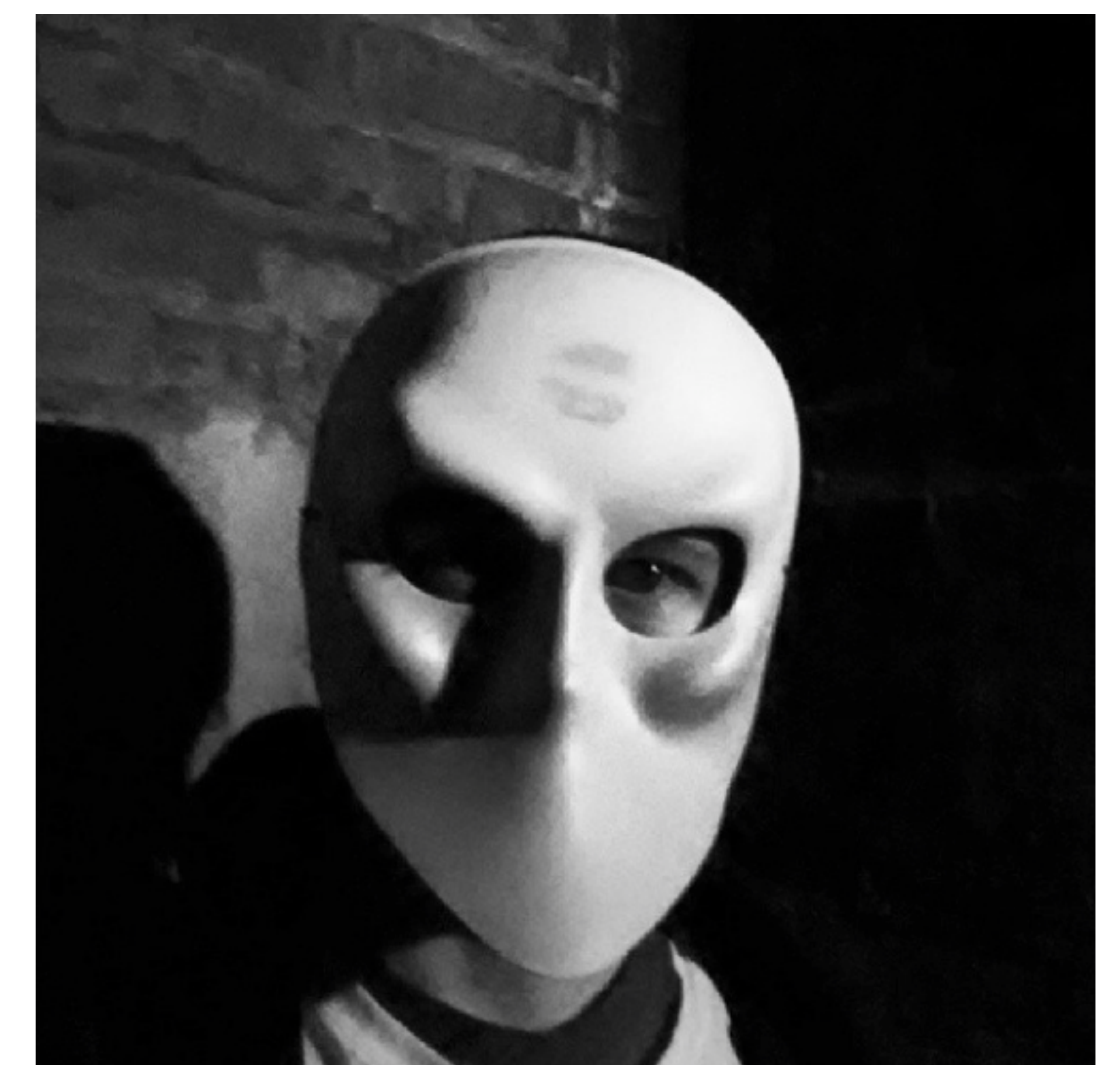
“The objective...is not to create an environment that supports the telling of a story, but design an experience of a story being told...first, concern for the experience of the audience is brought to the forefront. Second, the story is not the end itself, but a means by which the experience is rendered meaningful” (Ludwig, 55).

My Adventure in Wonderland

By research into immersive theatre and it's creation through books, articles, interviews, blogs, and reviews, I came up with a strategy to devise an immersive piece. 1) The Concept or Journey: What is the theme? What literature, if any, is to be used as a reference? Where and when is it taking place? 2) Sound: What music is guiding the piece and how does it fit into the world? After this step I move into creation. 3) Creating the world: This involves building rooms to create the world that must be as real as possible, because audience members will be in them not just looking at them. 4) Lighting or lack of: Mostly used to draw focus and accentuate certain aspects of the world, drawing strongly on shadows. 5) Characters: Developing the characters backstory, history, and “unseen text” which is then used to then create the characters. Actors are generally coached through the main ideas and major plot points but are asked to improvise many scenes. With these steps, I conceptualized a piece using Lewis Carroll's *Alice* literature and other *Alice* based media, primarily *Sucker Punch*.

...And What I Found There

The first part of the process is to conceptualize and create the idea of what you want the experience to be like. This was easy, mixing my research of immersive theatre and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* books, I came up with a the theme for my piece: Life should not be viewed solely through rational or metaphor; it is only through these combined that one can better comprehend in the world around them. Through out the piece I discovered the difficulties of creating immersive theatre. Not only is it complex and expensive, due to realism being maintained in all five senses, but it also requires a space before the design can even begin. I found it difficult to picture the needs of the rooms because I didn't have the size. Therefore I stuck to conceptualized versions of the rooms: the goal of the room and certain details that could help emphasize this. Overall I believe I succeeded in conceptualizing an immersive theatre piece and have gained a greater apparition of the requirements and creation of immersive theatre.



Edd Bass at *Sleep No More*. via Instagram @eddbass