

Yancheng *Eric* Zhang

A
Super
Date
with Mr.
Broom

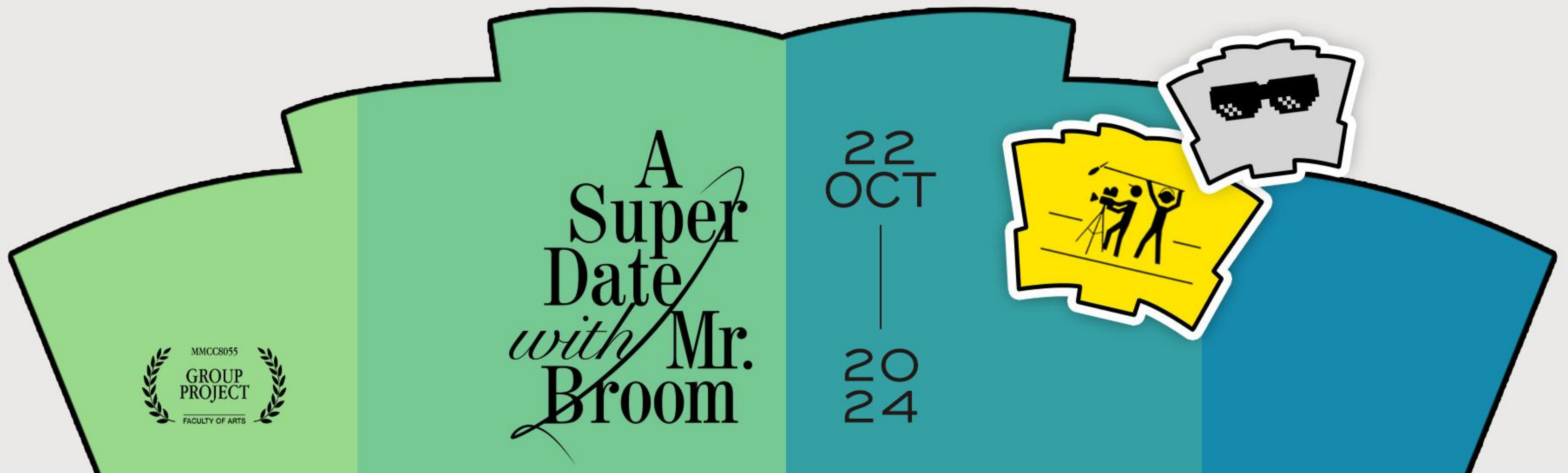
Assessment 3
MMCC8055 Performance Practices
2024 S2



Student OneID
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Performance Brief

2



Behind every performance, unseen hands craft the magic, and every creative deserves to be celebrated.

Since the initial concept of performing the behind-the-scenes was proposed, I've been involved in many aspects of this performance.

CONCEPT

When *A Super Date with Mr. Broom* opens its studio tour to outside audiences, both onstage and backstage creatives become visible, showcasing not only the actors on camera but the full spectrum of the entire crew.

This film, a play-within-a-play, tells the story of a girl's fantasy. She falls in love with her broom, and through a series of imagined conversations and shared challenges, they finally plan a wonderful date together. The girl carefully selects various outfits for the occasion, but she becomes disheartened when Mr. Broom flirts with Miss Mop at the restaurant. In the end, she lets go of her fantasy and turns her attention to the people and things around her, realising that her cat is the one who can truly be there for her.

INVOLVEMENT

LEADING ROLES

- Stage design
- Visual design (projections and props)
- Technical and lighting design

COLLABORATIVE ROLES

- Concept development
- Performance
- Venue coordination

SUPPORTING ROLES

- Assisting the director
- Role assignments
- Stage movement design

Detailed Process

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

PERSONAL ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Visual design
Performance
Other contributions

CHALLENGES, BREAKTHROUGHS, AND FURTHER INTERPRETATION

Delivery format
Behind-the-scenes of behind-the-scenes
Performing as a cameraman



COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

After Ren and Jean discussed the initial concept with us, they first completed a script draft for the film within the performance, setting the foundation for the project. Through subsequent online and in-person discussions, we finalised the core elements of the project and the props list quickly. We also assigned roles and tasks based on each member's interests and strengths.

Since the film represents the girl's fantasy, we chose music to drive the storyline, with lighting and projection enhancing the set's visual and immersive quality.

In early rehearsals, we not only refined our choice of props and crafted them based on inspiration that emerged in rehearsals, but also explored various ways to present the performance and finalised the background music and cue sheet. Meanwhile, the visual design work was carried out, with the duration of motion graphics determined by the composited music pieces.

After the initial preparations, we held a total of nine rehearsals starting from the midterm break. In the final rehearsals before the official performance, we refined performance details based on available equipment and actual rehearsal results, becoming more familiar with each person's role and the deeper core of the project. During rehearsals, we shared spontaneous sparks and perspectives, contributing to various aspects of the project together, such as acting, blocking, stage effects, and prop design.

BELOW Ren and Jean are finalising the music composition after the group decided on the storyline and selected the music segments.



PERSONAL ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

VISUAL DESIGN

I began creating visual assets early in the preparation period till the end, based on the latest group decisions and my understanding of the project. This provided a clear stylistic direction from the start and allowed time for printing and adjustments, ensuring readiness for the technical rehearsal and final performance.

For the stage backgrounds, I designed immersive surround backdrops for the film segment to match the setting of the studio tour. For the performance itself, I created backgrounds with the same design language as the distributed materials and props, including the welcome screen and the background for technical adjustments.

All visual assets followed a cohesive design language. I even designed a sign for the props storage area. This approach not only engaged ourselves with the project but also conveyed a sense of professionalism from our “studio” to the audience, thereby enhancing the perceived quality of the performance through the peripheral route.

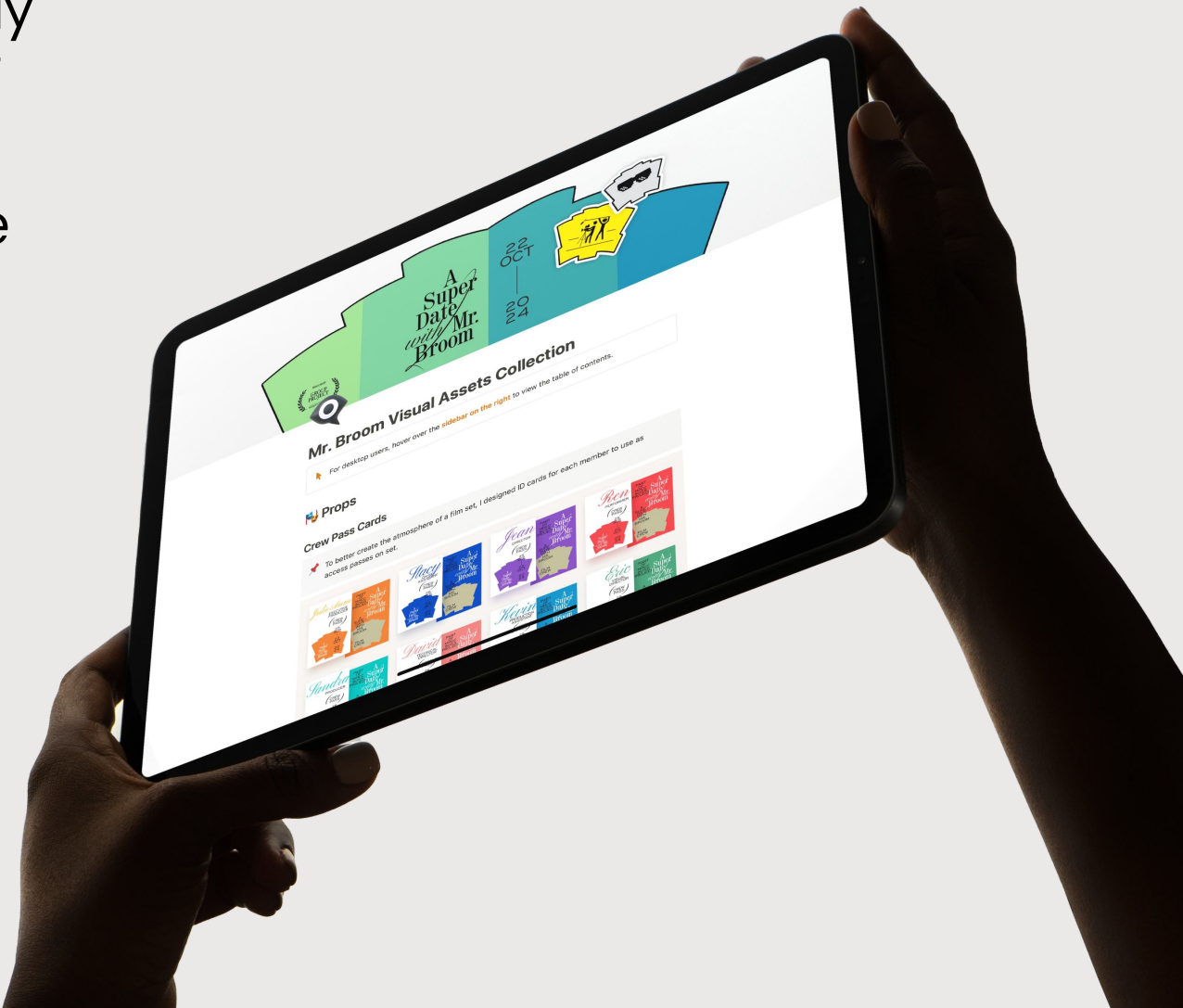


Mr. Broom’s graphical appearance served as a recurring visual element throughout the designs.



Visual assets and design concepts

See **Appendix A** for all visual assets and their design inspiration and concepts.



ABOVE Some visual elements incorporating Mr. Broom’s outline.
RIGHT Mr. Broom Visual Assets Collection website.

Whether I was the camera operator Eric or the thug attacking Mr. Broom, it was still authentically me behind the mask.

Detailed Process

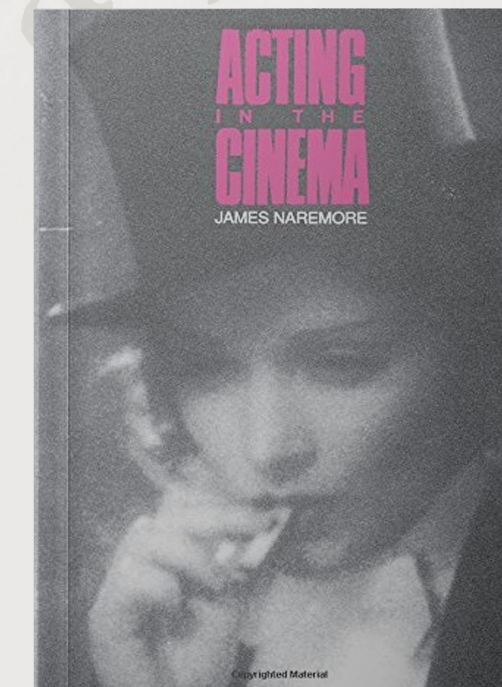
PERFORMANCE

In addition to serving as visual director, I also took on the roles of camera operator and actor in the film set, largely engaging in persona acting, where the fictional character aligns with the actor's public image (Naremore, 1998).

Playing the camera operator reflected how others see me, helping to create a closer connection with the audience, particularly the convenors and classmates. This role, infused with my personal characteristics, allowed the performance to be stylised and layered, and also became a journey of self-discovery through engagement and rehearsals.

Drawing from an interdisciplinary perspective on Bruce Lee's persona acting approach, I noticed that he often performed as himself in films, staying true to his real-life persona. However, despite not advocating high kicks in his actual martial arts philosophy, he used them in films to enhance visual effects and audience engagement (Teo, 2015). Similarly, I portrayed the camera operator with slightly exaggerated movements, such as dancing and large gestures, to heighten the stage expression and adapt my persona acting to the performance setting.

Mentioning Bruce Lee leads to my another role as a nunchuck villain, which not only showcased my own skills but also added to the drama. I also booked extra studio time to practice positioning and nunchaku.



ABOVE Close-up photo of the chapter explaining the concept of persona acting, *Acting in the Cinema* (1988), p. 23. Photo by Eric at Macquarie University Library, 2024.

LEFT Eric performs nunchaku in the performance.

BELOW Bruce Lee performs a high kick. This technique was not advocated by Lee for real combat but was used to enhance visual impact.



OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

I designed the lighting effects with Ren and David, our technical director. To keep everyone on track with positioning, I created a scene diagram that helped us familiarise ourselves after rehearsals and served as a handy tool for the director during stage blocking.

I also collaborated on prop creation, ensuring visual consistency and quality to prevent any detachment or unexpected issues during the performance, including Mr. Broom, candle lights, rose, and other props.



LEFT 1 The Scene Diagram (**Appendix D**) designed for easy reference.

LEFT 2 I optimise the candle lights arrangement with Stacy and a friend. We strung them together with rope and secured them with multiple layers of tape and strong adhesive.

BELOW David Manna. We included David as the technical director in our crew.



CHALLENGES, BREAKTHROUGHS, AND FURTHER INTERPRETATION

DELIVERY FORMAT

Throughout the preparation process, we adjusted the final presentation format, shifting from the original plan of synchronised streaming from a live camera feed to pre-recorded content, and eventually focusing solely on the live performance. This change came about after several rounds of friendly group debate and feedback from outside sources.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES

After deciding to focus on the stage performance, a key shift was to treat each member’s stage presence as a performance itself, rather than simply assisting in the onstage presentation.

Throughout many rehearsals, I reminded team members to ensure familiarity with their blocking and prop placements as backstage personnel, while also adding more exaggerated performance elements during scene transitions or moments on stage to give their roles distinct personalities and visibilities.

Additionally, during the concept development phase, I proposed treating the backstage work and the onstage filmmaking process as parallel and equal performances, with more interwoven moments. This aligns with our intended effect for the performance: the audience not only observes the “play within a play” but also becomes a spectator of the behind-the-scenes process. This multi-layered deconstruction blurs the traditional boundary between stage and audience, allowing viewers to continually shift their perspectives as they interpret the performance (Flaherty, 2005; Gasché, 1994). By watching the “behind-the-scenes of behind-the-scenes”, the audience can perceive our project both as a performance and as a reflection on the performance process itself.

LEFT Group chat screenshot. I conveyed my ideas about the importance of highlighting the backstage performance to the team through group chats and face-to-face discussions.



Deconstructive Performance

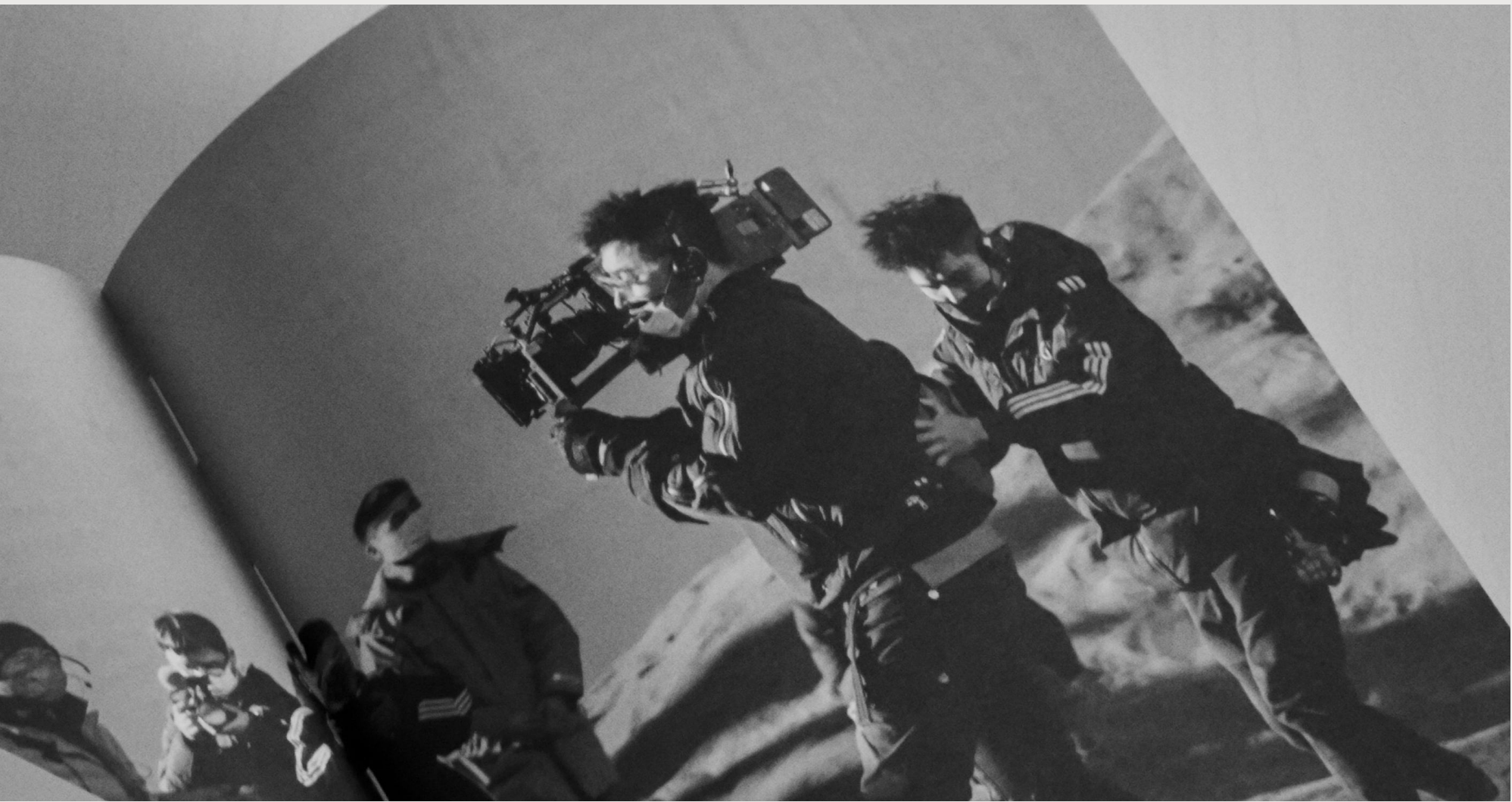
We deconstructed the classic performance pattern by presenting both the stage performance and the behind-the-scenes process to the audience.

Adding cut scenes to enhance the director's interactions with the crew.

I suggested adding several cut scenes and enhancing the director's interactions with the crew. This involved intentionally designing moments where crew members accidentally entered the film set and were exaggeratedly hurried offstage by the director without disrupting the overall performance. This approach would make the performance more dynamic and strengthen the immersive studio tour experience we aimed to create.

Our performance didn't fully capture the concepts we aimed to showcase.

Unfortunately, the final presentation of our performance didn't fully reflect the concepts outlined above. I believe this was partly because the backstage crew had numerous tasks during the performance as the essential duties, such as handling prop movement in sync with lighting and music cues. Additionally, since our performance was primarily connected through music, breaking up the film scenes with too many cuts might weaken the flow of the performance itself, potentially compromising both the onstage and backstage presentation. Overall, finding the subtle balance between these two aspects is something worth exploring further, whether in future performances or in other disciplines where similar ideas might apply.



PERFORMING AS A CAMERAMAN

My multiple roles in this performance continually embodied the layered structure of the performance-within-performance concept. Naremore (1988, p. 70) points out that actors on stage, within this concept, not only play a character but also participate in another performance within that character’s identity, causing the audience to alternate between immersion and detachment, thus prompting deeper reflection on the nature of performance.

To further enhance this effect in our performance, I added additional plot elements to my role as a camera operator. After the director called “cut”, I stepped off the stage to look for my production assistant to replace my full memory card. Through this dramatic design, I aimed to make the audience not only viewers of the performance but also visitors to the film studio. Additionally, inspired by the production notes on a Chinese sci-fi film by Shuo and Gwo (2023), I used an earphone to simulate an intercom system on set, further enhancing the character’s details.

“Does anyone see my production assistant? My memory card is full.”



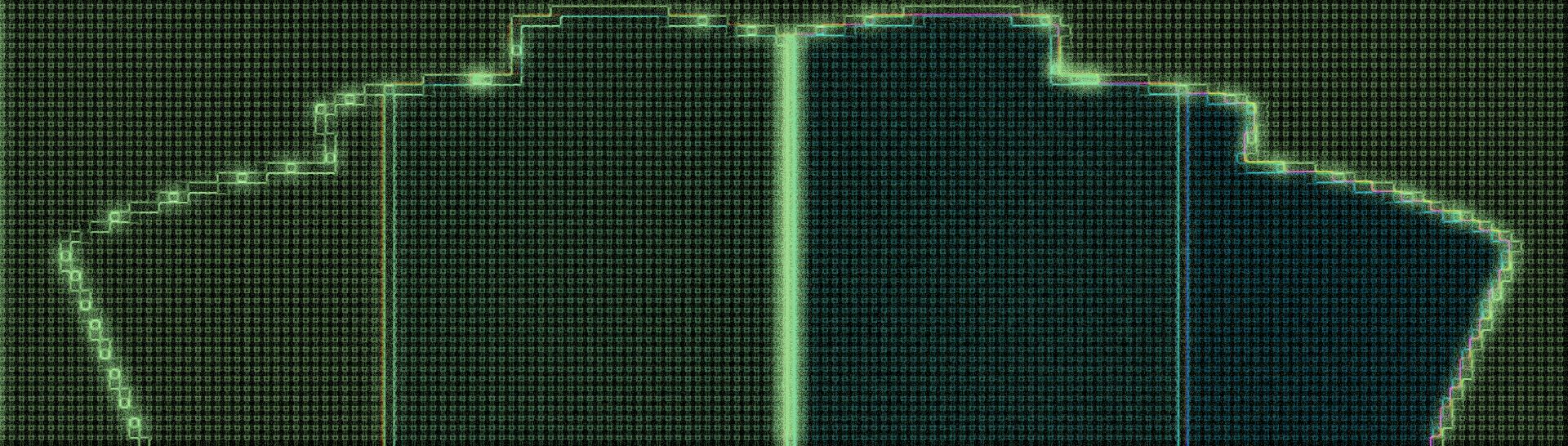
ABOVE Photo of a cameraman. In *The Wandering Earth II: Film Handbook*.

LEFT As I stepped off the stage and walked toward the audience, I deliberately placed my hand on the prop earphone to simulate a conversation with the crew.

In order to encourage the audience to think more deeply about the potential takeaways from our performance, I took additional steps to break the fourth wall. For instance, my designed portrayal was not entirely realistic for a film set. I calling the production assistant by job title instead of name, and deliberately placed my hand by my ear to make it obvious that I was attempting to communicate with other crew members through the intercom. This allowed the audience to easily understand and interpret my character’s actions from an outside-the-play perspective, reinforcing our concept that “onstage and backstage creatives deserve to be seen” by showcasing backstage work that might be unnoticed during the performance.

The Digital Toolbox

12





A Super Date with Mr. Broom

Collaboration zone

- Performance options
- ONE-TAKE STAGE SCRIPT: "A SUPER DATE WITH MR
- Narration Story board and Music Section
- Ref

Proposal

- Proposal
- Script

Technical workspace

- Lighting / Performance Cue Sheet
- Mr. Broom Visual Assets Collection
- Mr. Broom Backgrounds
- Scene Diagram link.ericzhang.design

Online resources

- Forced Entertainment Forced Entertainment
- LADA Live Art Development Agency Homepage - LADA Live Art Development Agency



The Digital Toolbox

ONLINE COLLABORATION

We used WhatsApp and Zoom for online discussion and Google Docs for collaboration. When members were unable to attend rehearsals in person, we also used Zoom for hybrid rehearsals, leveraging technology to achieve what would have been physically difficult otherwise.

I shared the background design concepts and drafts with the team through an online Notion page and unlisted YouTube video, allowing them to quickly review and provide feedback. I also uploaded visual assets to Google Drive for the team to access.

By using these online tools, we were able to establish the content and visual style of the performance early on, which allowed us to create a detailed cue sheet and other support materials to aid in both preparation and final performance, as well as for easy organisation and sharing after the performance.

ONLINE RESOURCES

I drew inspiration from the interactions between Norma and the cameraman in *Sunset Boulevard*, focusing on how the role of the cameraman could be more expressive on stage (Lloyd Webber & Price, 2017). In particular, I observed the cameraman’s responsibilities and actions during breaks in “filming” to inform my own movement design for the “cut” scenes in our performance.

- TOP LEFT** Some of the platforms used for online collaboration in this project.
- MIDDLE LEFT** Screenshot of the Notion page for this project. Subpages and external links lead to different collaboration pages.
- BOTTOM LEFT** Screenshot from *Sunset Boulevard* (2017 Broadway version) video. The cameraman performer is interacting with another actor.

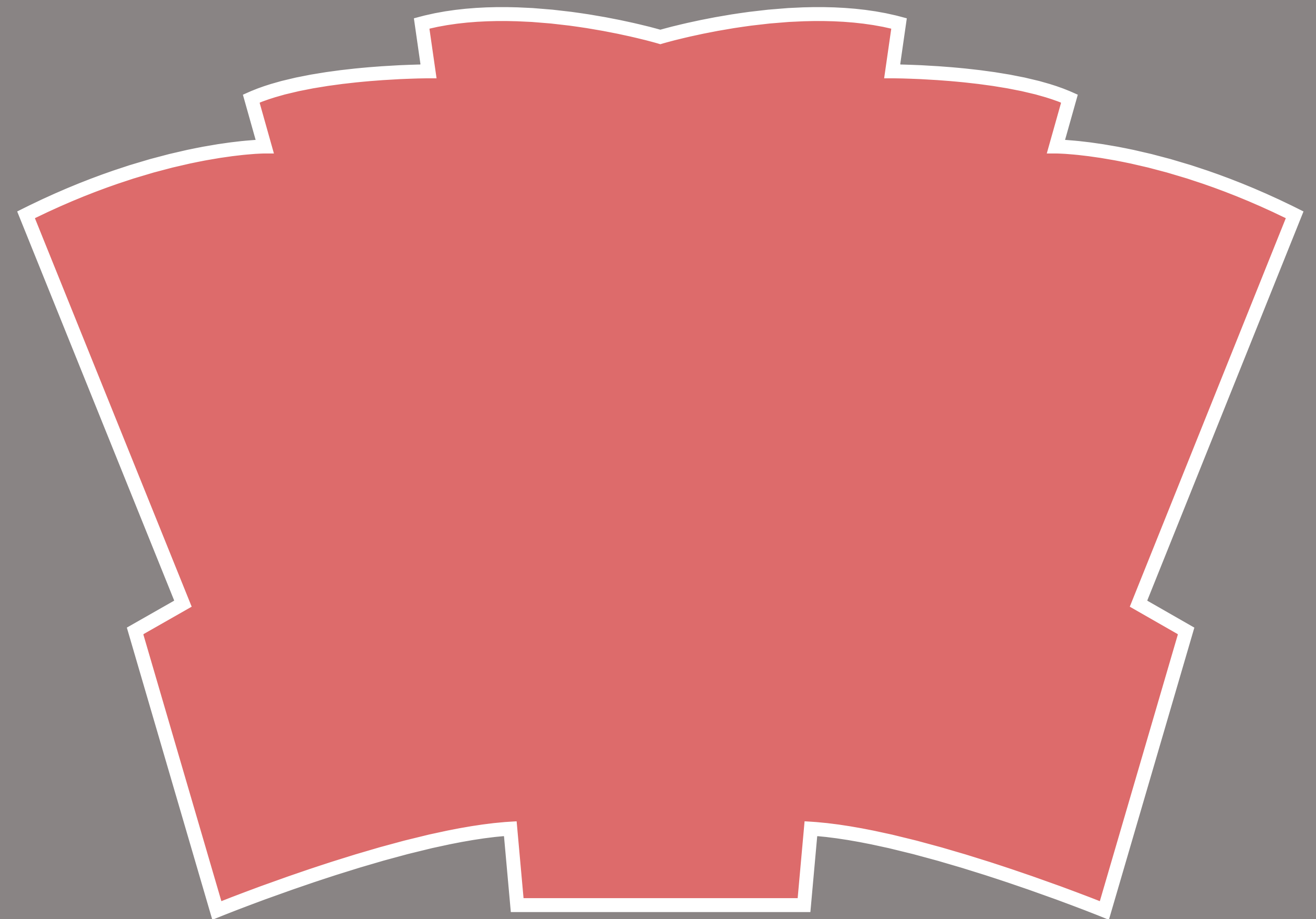
Ref. & Appendix

14

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

- A. Visual Assets Collection
- B. Project Album (Rehearsals, Performance, Stills)
- C. Cue Sheet
- D. Scene Diagram
- E. Performance Media List



REFERENCES

Flaherty, K. (2005). Theatre and metatheatre in Hamlet. *Sydney Studies in English*, 31(2005), 3-20.

Gasché, R. (1994). *Inventions of difference: on Jacques Derrida*. Harvard University Press.

Jones, P. (2007). *Drama as therapy volume 1: Theory, practice and research*. Routledge.

Lloyd Webber, A. (Producer), & Price, L. (Director). (2017). *Sunset Boulevard* [Theatrical production]. Broadway, New York, NY.

Naremore, J. (1988). *Acting in the Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shuo, F., & Gwo, F. (2023). *The Wandering Earth II: Film Handbook*. Citic Press.

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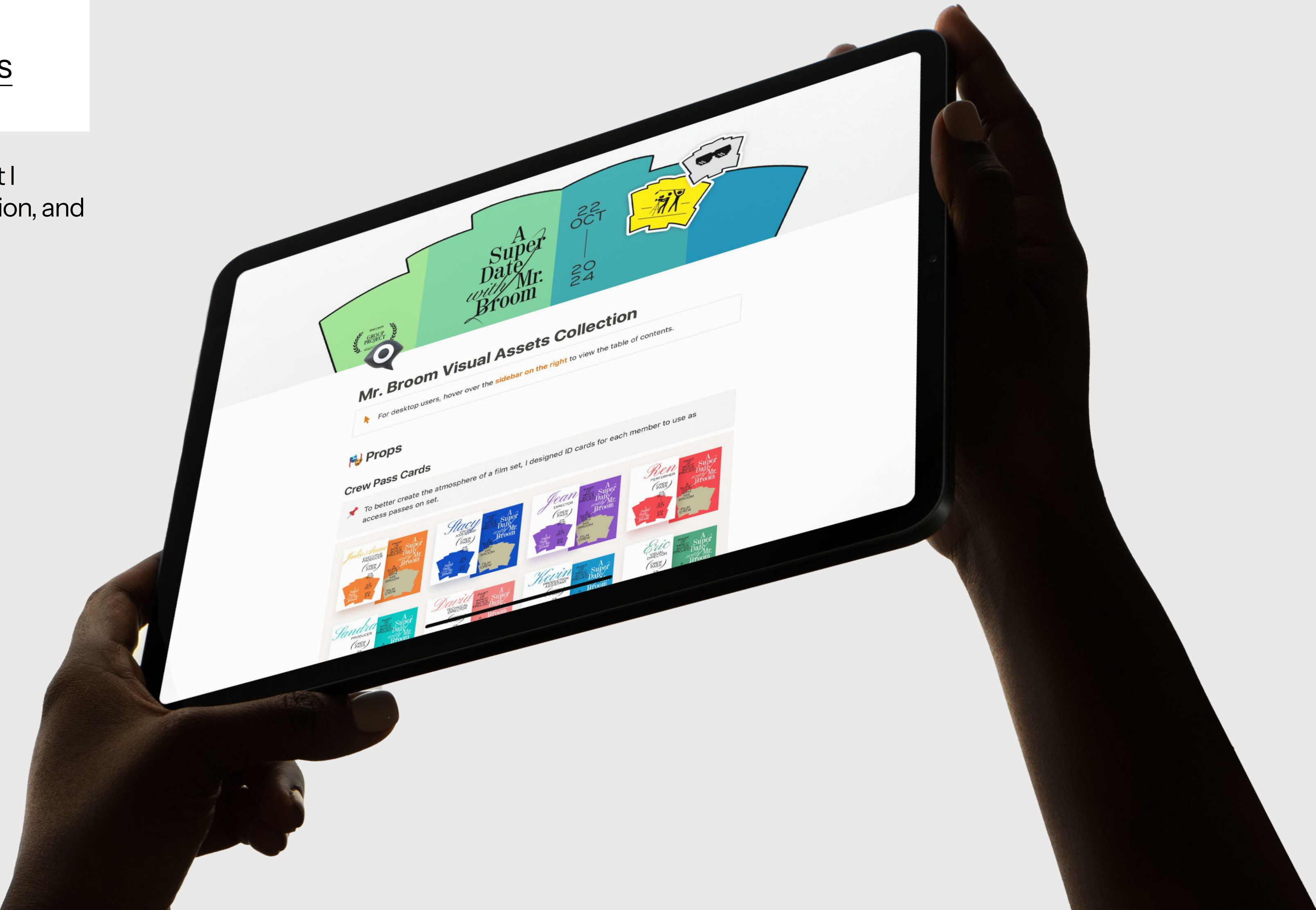
link.ericzhang.design/mr-broom-visual-assets

This website consolidates all props and visual-related content I designed, along with the design concepts, sources of inspiration, and testing process.

LIST

- Clapperboard
- On-set filming sign
- Crew pass card
- Film poster
- Studio tour invitation card
- Table tent for the restaurant scenes
- Do-not-touch reminder
- Rose (origami)
- Mr. Broom (co-created) and Miss Mop
- Scene diagram
- Background images and videos

Appendix A. Visual Assets Collection



Appendix B. Project Album



drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rQOwe5HoSIKC8VICfHrwG_NFEoT6u8Ge

Performance Day

Props

Rehearsals

Selected Performance Photos

This shared Google Drive folder includes photos and videos of props, rehearsals, the final performance, and the film stills I captured as the camera operator for this project.



Appendix C. Cue Sheet

The cue numbers in this Cue Sheet correspond to the naming numbers of the media files in Appendix E. Clear descriptions and precise cue-in times helped David and me quickly program the lighting and media during the technical rehearsal.

A Super Date with Mr. Broom | LIGHTING / PERFORMANCE CUE SHEET

Cue	Scene	Cue Action / Type	Projection File	Fixture	Cue In	Cue Fade In	Cue Description
01	Opening	All lights on	01_OPENING.jpg				
02	Apartment	Play "MUSIC_1"	02_APARTMENT.mp4		"Action"		Activate cue once the director says "321 action".
03	Restaurant		03_RESTAURANT.jpg		0:24		
04	Park		04_PARK.jpg		0:54		
05	Bruce Lee		05, 06_BRUCE LEE.jpg		1:27		
06	Attack		Same as 05		1:34		
07	Fireworks		07, 08_FIREWORKS.mp4		2:00		
08	Apartment		Same as 07		2:30		
09	Outfit_1		09_OUTFIT_1.mp4	Pink	2:49		
10	Outfit_2		10_OUTFIT_2.mp4	Blue	3:35		
11	Outfit_Pause		11_CLOSET.jpg		4:20		Optional
12	Cut	All front lights on	12_CUT.jpg		"Cut"		When the director says "cut". End of Part 1.
13	Outfit_3	Play "MUSIC_2"	13_OUTFIT_3.mp4	Orange	"Action"		Activate cue once the director says "321 action".
14	Final Restaurant		14_FINAL_RESTAURANT.jpg		0:40		
15	Apartment		15_APARTMENT.jpg		1:24		
16	Ending		16_ENDING.mp4 / 16_ENDING_IMG.jpg (if needed)		2:00		

Appendix D. Scene Diagram



link.ericzhang.design/mr-broom-scene-diagram

This Scene Diagram was initially drafted by Jean, and I created the digital version and iterated multiple versions based on rehearsal footage and post-discussion adjustments to achieve clarity and efficient information readability.

Additionally, I printed it in both A4 and A5 formats. Each printed version was spiral-bound to allow for easy flipping and page retention. I presented both versions to the director, allowing him to choose the one that best suited his usage habits and the needs of the actual performance as a prop.

COVER PHOTO Eric filming during the final performance. Photo by Li Wang.
BACK COVER Group photo of *A Super Date with Mr. Broom*. Li Wang, a friend of mine, came specifically to watch our final performance and sat in the audience area as my production assistant. She also provided valuable feedback for the project. This group photo was originally meant to include Dr. Julie-Anne Long, our executive producer, and Mr. David Manna, our technical director. I would like to express my gratitude to the three individuals mentioned here.

Appendix E. Performance Media List

SUBMITTED FILES

- MR_BROOM_01_OPENING.jpg
- MR_BROOM_02_APARTMENT.mp4
- MR_BROOM_03_RESTAURANT.jpg
- MR_BROOM_04_PARK.jpg
- MR_BROOM_05, 06_BRUCE LEE.jpg
- MR_BROOM_07, 08_FIREWORKS.mp4
- MR_BROOM_09_OUTFIT_1.mp4
- MR_BROOM_10_OUTFIT_2.mp4
- MR_BROOM_11_CLOSET.jpg
- MR_BROOM_12_CUT.jpg
- MR_BROOM_13_OUTFIT_3.mp4
- MR_BROOM_14_FINAL_RESTAURANT.jpg
- MR_BROOM_15_APARTMENT.jpg
- MR_BROOM_16_ENDING
- MR_BROOM_16_ENDING_IMG.jpg
- MR_BROOM_MUSIC_1.wav
- MR_BROOM_MUSIC_2.wav

DESIGN FOLDERS

- > Clapperboard
- > Crew Pass Card
 - > Effects
- > JPG
- > Print
- > PSD
- > Filming Sign
- > Mr Broom and Miss Mop
- > Poster
- > Reminder
- > Studio Tour Invitation
 - Invitation_Mockup.jpg
 - Invitation_Mockup.psd
 - Studio Tour Invitation_1.jpg
 - Studio Tour Invitation_2.jpg
 - Studio Tour Invitation.psd
- > Table Tent

