



EVOKE

An Exploration of Theatrical Design's Emotional Stimulus

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The Initial Spark

What if there were no actors on stage, and theatrical design became the performer? The performances in Victoria community consistently prove that our traditional theatrical practice is focused the performer; the other theatrical elements support their emotional journey. The elements of performance design, such as sound, lighting, and set, create the world around the performer and yet, their impact often goes unnoticed by the audience. These were the questions that prompted the creation of the performative installation *EVOKE*, which set out to explore ways in which performance design alone can tell a story, transform the atmosphere and environment, and have the equivalent emotional impact on the audience as a live performer.



Image 1.(3)

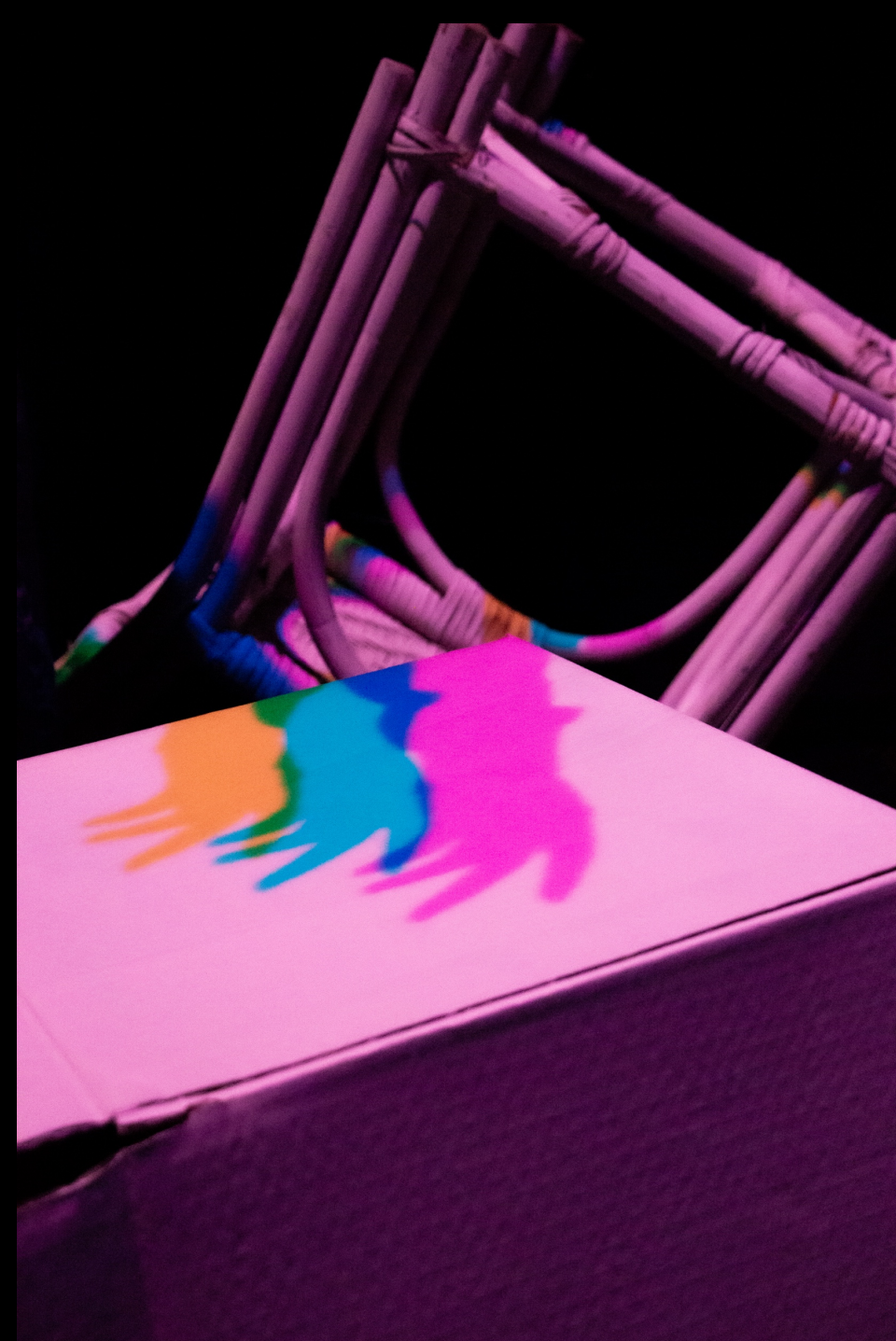


Image 2.(3)

Theories and Practices

EVOKE used the five stages of grief to explore the emotional impact of performance design on the audience. Research on spatial, semiotic, and affect theory as well as the examination of both traditional scenography in Canada and the contemporary immersive performance practices informed how different audience theories were materialized into emotional states within the installation.

The Installation

EVOKE explored these theories and research in a 10-minute looping performative installation on February 20th and 21st in the Barbara McIntyre theatre. The room encompassed the audience, abandoning many traditional performance conventions by putting audience in the middle of the performance area.



Image 3.(3)

Observations of the Performances

The unity of the design elements – set, lighting, and sound – formed an open space for the audience to explore and create their own experience. Different sound and lighting cues were triggered depending on where the audience was in the space, and therefore each performance was unique and different from the previous. Although most audience members were seemed unsure if there were boundaries within space, they still physically interacted with the materials around them. One surprising observation was that the changes in the sound and lighting influenced the physical movement of the audience within the performance space. In addition, at the end of the performance the audience members took their time leaving the space - some even continuing to stay for the next performance - and often kept looking back into the room as they walked away.



Image 4.(7)



Image 5.(3)

Conclusion

Through the audience's exploration and reluctance to leave the space as well as the feedback collected anonymously at the end of the performance, it is evident that most audience members formed an emotional connection with the surrounding performance space. This proved that the performance space could take the audience on an emotional journey, which perhaps can be equated to the connection formed with a performer on stage.

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