



The Scenographic Imagination, Third Edition (Ann Arbor Paperback)

Darwin Reid Payne

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In this enlarged and thoroughly revised third edition of his widely used text, Darwin Reid Payne explores the principles and philosophies that shape the visual elements of theatre. Payne sets out to discover who scenographers are and to define their responsibilities. He sees scenographers as not merely craftspersons but artists with a special vision that spans all the arts. Such artists are in a position to extend and amplify underlying meanings of the production. The proper goal of beginning scenographers, according to Payne, is one day to be able to approach the job as artists in full command of their craft. Payne seeks to instill in beginning scenographers a basic core of knowledge: an understanding of theatre history and the development of drama; a knowledge of art history and an understanding of periods and styles of architecture, painting, sculpture, furnishings, and costume; and a familiarity with the principles, techniques, and materials of pictorial and three-dimensional design. This new edition contains 248 illustrations, 38 more than the second edition. Payne's goal, certainly, is to teach students what to do and how to do it; equally important, however, is Payne's view that scenographers must know why. To Payne, Scenography is an art whose scope is nothing less than the whole world outside the theatre. Scenographers must read not only in their own field but in others as well. Payne has incorporated into his text many suggestions for outside readings, quoting passages and even entire chapters from important works. Stressing research, Payne argues that without knowledge of the literature of their own and related arts, scenographers cannot grow. And that is the emphasis of this book: to present aspiring scenographers with an approach and a set of concepts that will enable them to grow. Toward that end, Payne establishes five priorities, the first of which is to develop in students what he calls time vision, or the ability to see the historical past as a living place with living inhabitants. The second priority is to bring about an awareness that allows students to see beneath the surface of objects and events. Third, students must be helped to recognize and appreciate the difference between the concept of space as it exists outside the theatre and the concept of space as it is used within the theatre. The fourth priority is to ingrain in students an understanding of the importance of imagery to the scenographer, and the final priority is to teach those technical skills necessary to carry out the concepts of the scenographer.

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