

Scratching

The following section of this portfolio contains a selection of images that have served as inspiration from the initial conception of this project. The process in which I discovered inspiration is referred to as *scratching*. Twyla Tharp, professional choreographer and theatre artist, says that “the first steps of a creative act are like groping in the dark: random and chaotic, feverish and fearful, a lot of busy-ness with no apparent or definable end in sight” (94). She intends for the artist to dig through everything to find inspiration. We should act as if we are sponges and absorb all we can that could possibly influence our work. A way to consider this process is as a more creative way to conduct dramaturgical research. It is more free form and less academic. When scratching, one is encouraged to find inspiration that appeals to a variety of senses. I, being a very visually dependent artist, found specific images to be the most useful while working on this play. However, I also found inspiration in a variety of songs that helped me to create a concise world for this story to exist within.

Scratching is a useful tool when communicating with designers at the beginning of a creative process. When I had my first meeting with my design team, I was sure to bring my computer in order to show them the different ideas that I had floating around in my head, but in a more concrete fashion. By showing designers these images and sounds, more specific dialogue is formed. Designers are able to draw inspiration from the lines, colors, and textures inherent in each piece of scratching. The designers can then take this newfound information and use it as an influence upon their personal design process. By sharing scratching, as a director, I am able to ensure that I am on the same page as everybody else on the team. We are all helping to tell the same story. This beginning step will lead to a cohesive final product when the performance occurs on opening night.

Please view the following included images with specific description. Additional music that served as inspiration is included on an attached USB drive in MP3 format.



(<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=16466>)

This is a lithograph by Jan Matulka titled: *New York*. It was created before 1925. This piece includes sharp, bold lines. There is high contrast because the work is only in greyscale. The piece represents a hard, cold, unfriendly world that I find to be important to *Machinal*. When I first viewed this image, I immediately thought of how these lines could be an influence upon the choices that our set designer could make.



(http://www.blogg.org/blog-43176-themes-german_expressionism_1915_1925-273092-offset-15.html)

A German Expressionist poster by Wilhelm Rudolph from 1924, titled: *Helf am Werk der IAH* (*Help the Work of the IAH*). This poster maintain the black and white concept I aimed to represent throughout the play. The lines are harsh and unforgiving. The face detailed in the center is agonized and pained. There is a suggested need to constantly work and remain a piece of the daily machine of life, especially after war.



(<http://unurthed.com/2007/07/16/german-expressionist-woodcuts/>)

A German Expressionist woodcut by Christian Rohlf, titled *Large Head* (1922). The use of positive and negative space, as well as contrast, stood out to me while I was scratching. The almost unrecognizable face was also a striking image.



(<http://www.josephmintonart.com/JosephMintonArt.html>)

A contemporary expressionist piece by Joseph Minton titled *The Beckoning* (2008). The large, grotesque, pressing hand is what made this piece pop out to me. There is constant imagery in this play about fat, pressing hands. I was reminded of the character of George H. Jones and how he manhandles Helen. This image is rather ghostly. It is, again, primarily black and white.



(https://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_image.aspx?image=ps76671.jpg&retpage=21454)

This is *Self-portrait with a skeleton arm* by Edvard Munch. It is a lithograph from 1895. There is a sense of solitude and isolation within this image. The skeleton arm at the bottom sends out a message of eminent death. The self-portrait immediately caused me to think of the character of the Priest in particular. This man is cold. He is stark. He is unfeeling. These characteristics also apply to my image of the Priest. Additionally, the Priest summons the death of Helen at the end of the play. This skeleton arm is fitting.



(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_5vBDkKTg3rE/SuhIqj49_CI/AAAAAAAAAdc/w6at6-Y3h8s/s1600-h/m.jpg)

This is a poster from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, a German Expressionist film. The way that red stood out on this hand caused me to immediately associate the image with blood on the hands of a worker. The way the color red pairs with black, white, and grey is vibrant. It is this image in particular that caused me to embrace the artistic choice to have red be the only color that stood apart from the greyscale uniformity of the stage picture. Red would only be seen on Helen's lips and fingernails. To me, this represents the blood on her hands for the murder of George H. Jones and the blood on her lips for the affair that inspired her to commit the crime.



(http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-v_jPK-GDUic/UmVjVKKzFCI/AAAAAAAAACJE/EnFQlD8uH0g/s1600/Mar_a.jpg)



(<http://moonboog.com/sites/default/files/metropolis-iii.jpg>)

These two images are of the character Maria from the film *Metropolis*. Maria is strange, but beautiful. She is a great representation of a lady from the 1920s. This idea inspired my casting decisions for the role of the Young Woman. The top image, which shows Maria hooked up to a machine, immediately caused me to think of the Young Woman's death by electric chair. She is stoic and seemingly unafraid. She is strong although she is about to meet her demise. Ideas of a robotic nature also come to mind due to the wiring attached to her head.



(http://fc05.deviantart.net/fs71/f/2011/033/f/f/bg_german_expressionism_by_fikey-d38mld5.jpg)

This image is from the German Expressionist film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. What intrigues me about this picture is the use of light and shadow. The windows on the walls are all off-kilter. This world is crooked and strange. This serves as inspiration primarily for lighting design. Windows are used often throughout the production as a place for characters to retreat to. I believe that a shadow of windows being cast on the ground is a creative choice.



(http://www.posterconnection.com/auctions/auction_34/images/097.jpg)

This is a poster for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* by Robert Wiene. The sharp, harsh angles immediately stand out to me. The image is cold and creates a feeling of darkness and isolation. The pale, grey-blue coloring of this poster connects me to images of a harsh, metallic world. This color could be useful as a gel-color choice for the lighting designer.



(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_Av6QbG3542M/TUY5_q_DR8I/AAAAAAAAANE/e9C0JBatKzA/s1600/film%2Bnoir%2Bbig%2Bcombo.jpg)

This image is from the film *The Big Combo*, a film noir from 1955. The silhouettes of this particular picture lead me to images of a dimly lit stage. The world of *Machinal* is dark, and at moments it can be mysterious. There is an element of the unknown or even being lost. The fog in this image creates a dream-like or hazy mood for me. I believe that in *Machinal*, Helen's thoughts and memories are clouded like in this picture.

There are moments in *Machinal* where Helen hears offstage voices. My original thought, was to stage these moments in Episode 2 and Episode 7 as silhouetted images; however, once conversations moved forward with my design team I came to the conclusion that I preferred the idea of having simply the voices of the actors represent the offstage conversations. These voices would later be recorded and morphed to sound like they were in a void or fog in Helen's mind. Although this particular image was never created on the stage by means of staging composition or picturization, this idea was still conveyed through sound design choices.



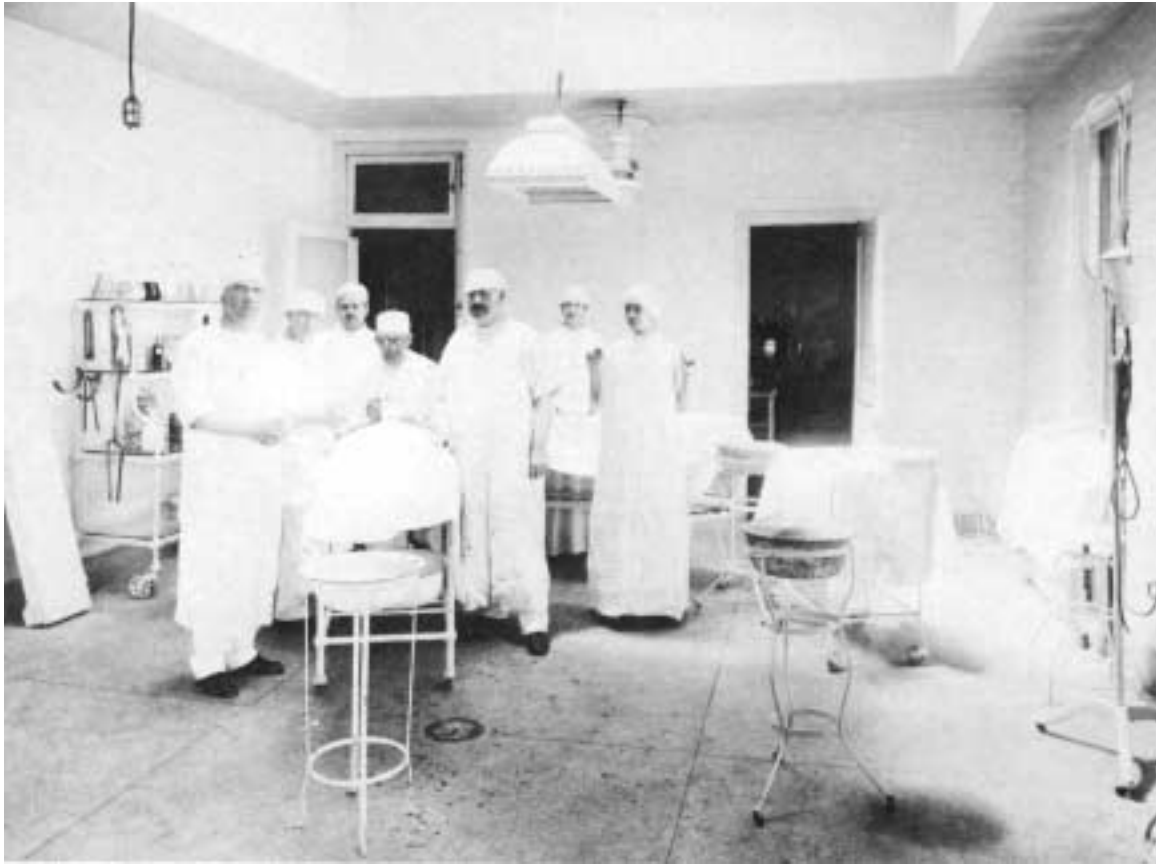
(<http://images.fineartamerica.com/images-medium-large/2-office-scene-1920s-granger.jpg>)

This photograph of a 1920s office girl completely embodies my vision of the Telephone Girl character, and the other office workers, in *Machinal*. Her black and white dress was particularly inspiring because it incorporated the color scheme that I wanted to work with. Also, the color and cuffs on this dress have sharp, diagonal lines that can only exist in the mechanized, harsh world of the play. This girl seems sweet with her soft, curly hair, but she is engulfed with the uniform that society has placed upon her.



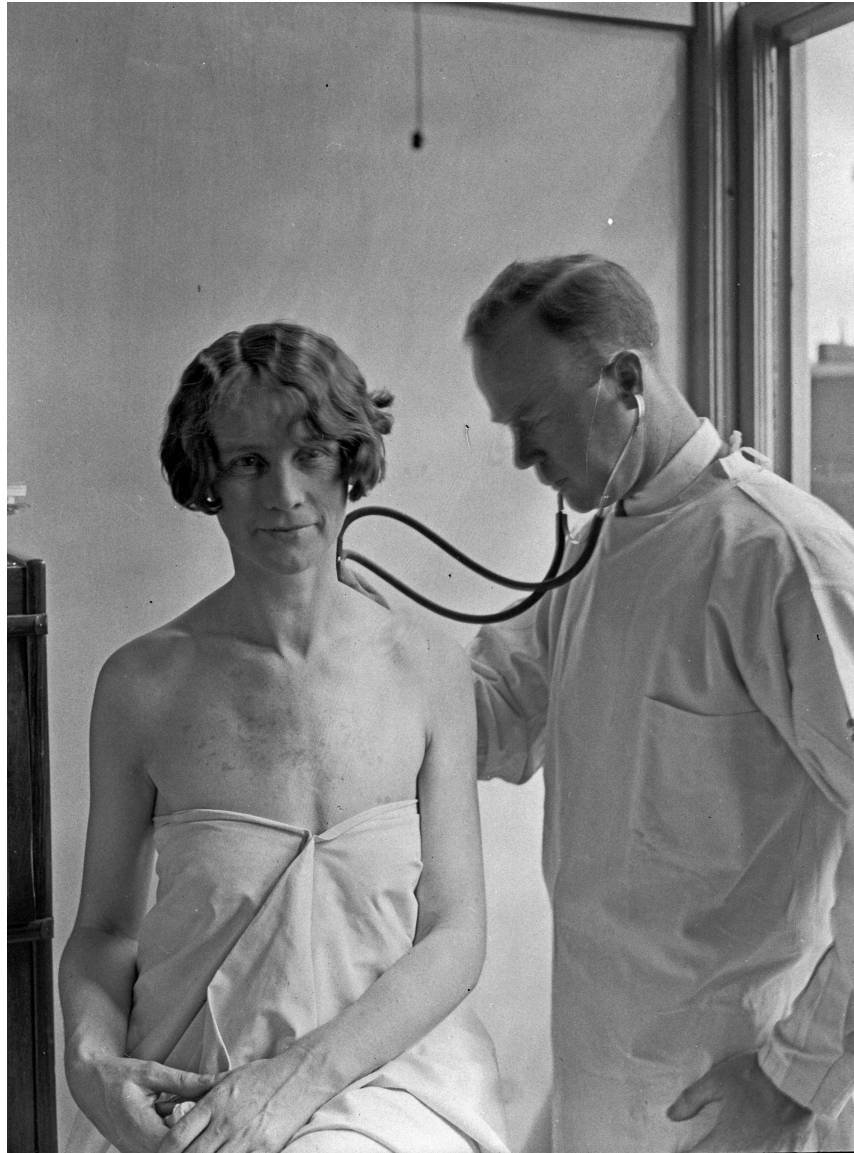
(http://www.officemuseum.com/ImagesWWW/1925_Accounting_Office_Brooklyn.JPG)

This is a photograph of a 1920s accounting office in Brooklyn, New York. What makes this image important for my concept of *Machinal* is the fact that there are only women seen working in this office space. They are all a single unit, or machine, working to complete similar, mundane tasks. In the script, the office workers are presumably intended to be a mixture of men and women; however, after viewing this photograph and contemplating the image of the George H. Jones Company office, I decided it would be a more effective choice to cast only female actors in Episode 1. A bunch of women who take orders from one man highlights the sense of patriarchy that encompasses the world of *Machinal*.



(<http://homeoint.org/cazalet/reading/reading17.jpg>)

This picture is of an early 1900s operating room. This room is a mixture of clean and dirty. When you look at the floor of this operating room, it looks dingy and almost moldy. All of the doctors and nurses are perfect clones of one another. They all work as a machine to help fix the sick. The way that these people are staring into the camera creates a feeling of unfriendliness. These people look like robots to me. The bright, uncomfortable lighting is especially inspiring for Episode 4 in the play. When you are in a hospital, it is as if there is a spotlight on you at all times, washing you out. This is how I believe the Young Woman feels when she is in the hospital. Even though she is in the spotlight, she is actually so washed out it is as if she does not exist.



(https://farm4.staticflickr.com/3570/3786098177_8836fc1d53.jpg)

This photograph is of a doctor and patient from the 1920s. The white smock that the lady is wearing in this photograph led me to think about the final scene of the play. It was from this image that I made the choice to put the Young Woman in a smock before she is put to death in the electric chair. I feel like the woman in this picture is stripped of her individuality. This is exactly what happens to the Young Woman at the end of the play. She is stripped of her individuality and her humanity.



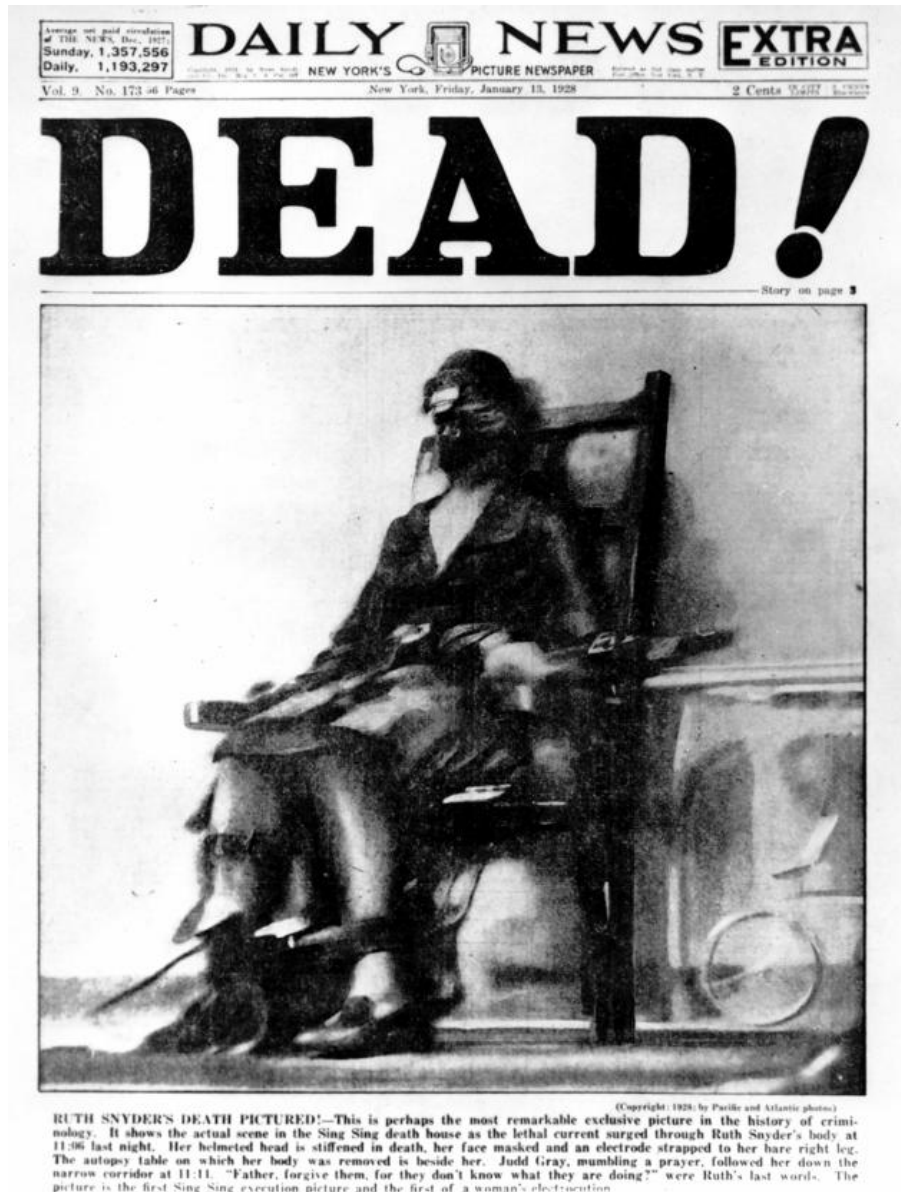
(<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/photos-americanhistory/Speakeasy.jpg>)

This illustration of a 1920s speakeasy serves as inspiration for Episode 5: Prohibited. There is a lot of life in this picture. I feel as though the scene that occurs in the speakeasy is one of the only scenes in the play that actually has life to it. This image also helped me to come to the conclusion that the speakeasy in the play is not nearly as fancy as the above image. The speakeasy in Episode 5 is very sleazy. A commonality between this image and my idea of the speakeasy setting is that both of them are very busy and always full of people of all sorts.



(<http://paleofuture.gizmodo.com/what-new-york-city-sounded-like-in-the-1920s-1445950942>)

This is a photograph of Fifth Avenue in New York City in 1926. Whenever there are transitions between scenes, this is the image that I think about. This image depicts the hustle and bustle of New York in the 1920s. Everybody has a place to be. Everyone has a destination. Everyone is moving constantly from one place to another.



(http://assets.nydailynews.com/polopoly_fs/1.1549420.1387220159!/img/httpImage/image.jpg_gen/derivatives/landscape_635/greatest-hits-crime-1920s-new-york-noir-frontpage.jpg)

This is the front page of the Daily News the day after Ruth Snyder was executed in the electric chair. This image is so powerful. The first moment I saw it, I knew that this was what the final image of the play had to be. The Young Woman should complete the newspaper article.

List of Songs:

- 1.) Arcade Fire – Flashbulb Eyes
- 2.) Arcade Fire – My Body is a Cage
- 3.) Florence + The Machine – Leave My Body
- 4.) Modest Mouse – Perpetual Motion Machine
- 5.) Pink Floyd – Money
- 6.) Pink Floyd – Time
- 7.) Pink Floyd – Welcome to the Machine
- 8.) Regina Spektor – Machine

All of these songs are contemporary. They did not serve as inspiration based off of time period; however, they did inspire me when it comes to the tone of the play. These songs are all very mechanical and methodical. Some are strangely electric in their sound. All of them demonstrate the relationship that our bodies have to the machine of life.

What happens when our body is stuck in the machine? What happens when our body exits the machine?

These are some thoughts that I had when I listened to music during my process of scratching.