

**Propel, Produce, Perform:  
Community Theatre and Mobile Architecture  
on Lake of the Woods**

by  
Rebecca A. Daly

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Architecture

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
July 2012

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**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**  
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**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**

Date: July 11, 2012

AUTHOR: Rebecca A. Daly

TITLE: Propel, Produce, Perform: Community Theatre and Mobile Architecture on Lake  
of the Woods

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL: School of Architecture

DEGREE: MArch

CONVOCATION: October

YEAR: 2012

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For my parents, who always encouraged me to be the black sheep; you are the wind in my sails.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Combining the cultural value of community theatre with the adaptability of mobile architecture, this thesis proposes the design of a floating theatre on Lake of the Woods, Ontario, Canada. A theatre, atop a barge, along with other production facilities brings theatre experience into the multiple communities living on the shores of the lake.

Drawing from the tradition of alternative theatre, the barge provides a dynamic theatre experience rather than a conventional one. Theatre architecture, comprised of a “kit-of-parts”, allows remote communities to participate in the production and execution of their own theatre, thereby promoting local cultural identities. This mobile theatre not only serves as a shared cultural resource, but adapts to, and draws communities together in an initiative of education, participation and exposure to the process involved in the development of a theatrical performance.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my advisor, Jane Abbott, I thank you for your unparalleled design intuition and continuous guidance; you were my navigation and kept me on-course.

To my supervisor, Sarah Bonnemaïson, I thank you for your unyielding calmness and support; you helped weather the storms.

To my family and friends, you were the glue that held me together and without you, this boat would have never set sail.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Thesis Statement

Can a floating theatre promote cultural identity by providing the tools to facilitate active community interaction with theatre production?

### Value of Alternative Theatre

Theatre has always played an active role in shaping and passing-on cultural values. Through storytelling, dance, and music, societies have relied on performance as a tool to celebrate, connect, entertain, educate and support their culture in the face of change.

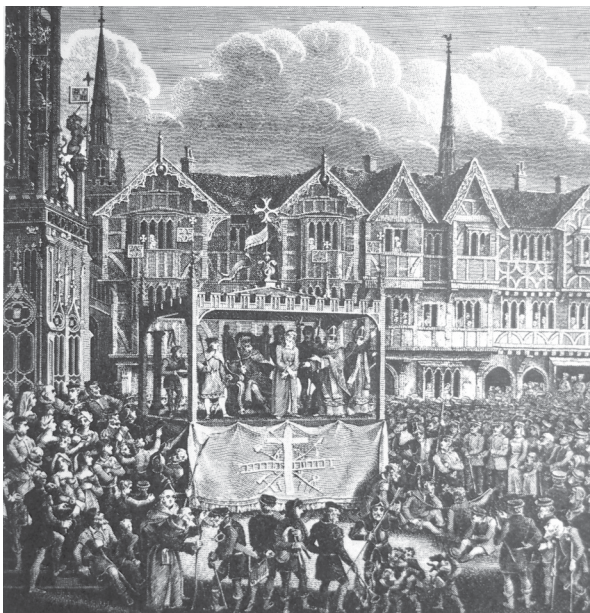


Figure 4.4. Program-map distributed to spectators of the 1946 Ramnagar Ramlila

Program-map of the 1946 Ramnagar Ramlila, a tradition that originates from the Indian subcontinent. The play is staged annually often over ten or more successive nights. From Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*.

Historically, theatrical events were attended by the majority of people in a community as they were a primary means of cultural, social and political engagement. In these instances, it was equally important for members of the audience to engage with one another as it was with the performance.

At the turn of the 20th century, theatre transformed from an inclusive and responsive event to one prepared outside the public eye. The architectural tradition, popularized in the 19th century, rigidly separated spectators and performers in two adjacent spaces. Furthermore, advancements in stage sets, lighting and acoustics demanded that the audience be fixed in a relationship to the stage as distancing was necessary for the efficacy of the spectacle. While these technologies had propelled the theatre spectacle forward they consequently resulted in higher costs of production. As a result, theatre culture became catered to a very specific audience that was financially capable of attending.



Performance of a cycle play on a pageant wagon from the 15th century. From Oscar Brockett, *History of Theatre*.



The stuffy interior of a 19th century theater box. From Chrēstos Geōrgiou Athanasopoulos, *Contemporary Theatre: Evolution and Design*.

## The Performer/Spectator Relationship

Prior to 1965, the number of alternative theatre projects outside the mainstream could be counted on one hand.<sup>1</sup> However, since then, the concept of alternative theatre has positioned itself against dominant theatre practice by emphasizing the different signals of importance that are inherently attached to the theatrical event such as cultural significance, community interaction and the potential for education.

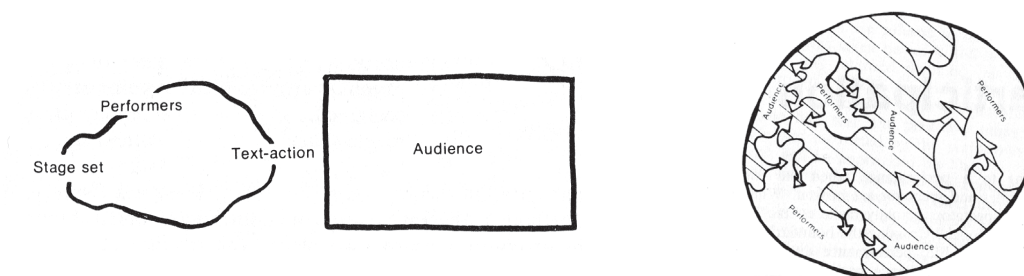
One of the more influential pedagogies contributing to alternative theatre practice was set forth by Richard Schechner in the 1960s. The approach, termed by Schechner as “Environmental Theatre”, challenged

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<sup>1</sup> Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performances: Radical Theatre as Cultural Interventions* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 105.

traditional theatre by shifting the focus towards audience awareness and the interactive relationships between performers and spectators. Schechner recognized that the action surrounding a performance is not localized on the stage but is an environment that encompasses a series of interlocked systems – those of the performers, those of the spectators and those of the spaces that they occupy.

For Schechner, audience participation takes place “precisely at the point where the performance breaks down and becomes a social event.”<sup>2</sup> In order for theatre to become a vehicle to encourage community engagement, all aspects of the performance need to be considered alive.



Contrasting diagrams describing audience/performer relationship in orthodox (left) and environmental (right) theatre practice. Drawing by Richard Schechner. From Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theatre*

Baz Kershaw in his book *The Politics of Performance*, asserts that the wide variety of initiatives and practices of the theatrical avant-garde are all derived from the same notion: to empower people through “encouraging ‘the continuous regeneration of the spirit of community’”.<sup>3</sup> In his research, Kershaw looks to Britain's alternative theatre movement between 1960-1990 in an attempt to draw conclusions regarding the cause and effect of alternative

<sup>2</sup> Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater* (New York: Applause Books, 1994), 40.

<sup>3</sup> Kershaw, *The Politics of Performances*, 60.

theatre on their surrounding communities. He notes three distinct characteristics that he feels are essential factors in supporting and engaging community through theatre:

- 1) performances are created outside established theatre buildings and therefore every aspect of performance has to be constructed in contexts which were largely foreign to theatre.
- 2) all audiences are unique
- 3) alternative theatre grows out of and augments the major oppositional cultural formations of the period.<sup>4</sup>

Susan Bennett, echoing Kershaw, remarks that “such theatre, in it's seeking out of non-traditional spaces and audiences, has brought about the devolution of performance from urban centres to a much broader geographic representation.”<sup>5</sup> Recognizing these factors, alternative theatre groups build an identity within the community that is centralized around the characteristics and desires specific to each place.

### **Theatre Production and Reception**

In recent theatre practices, many alternative theatre groups are exploring not only the relationship between performer and spectator but that of theatrical production and reception of the piece. By engaging the community to contribute to the production, theatre groups are able to learn directly from the audience as to what their needs and desires are, rather than imposing on them what they think they need or would enjoy.

Susan Bennett, in her book *Theatre Audiences*, advocates that the cultural DNA of a particular community must be considered as the primary driver for participation. “Here the entertainment is related to the particular characteristics of

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4 Ibid., 61.

5 Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 97.

individuals or of the place itself... the event of community theatre is able to act as a social affirmation of a particular group of people.”<sup>6</sup>

In his book, *Cultural Democracy*, James Bau Graves furthers this point by saying that engaging community members in the creative process, “solidifies cultural heritage and value while opening it up to the possibility of innovation.”<sup>7</sup> According to Graves, the significance of performance in many cultures is the residue of community involvement where preparations surrounding the big event can perhaps carry more meaning than its actualization.<sup>8</sup> Performance does not simply occur at a specific time between a specific set of individuals; it is an iterative process that is seeded in activities that occur long before and after the performance exchange. Initial engagement in the productive phase instills a sense of pride in the product and has the potential to attract a broader audience that is not only willing to attend but to participate in production of the piece.

## **Re-evaluating the Theatre Environment**

The theatre is an active place, a complex system of transformation. Like the communities they support, alternative community theatre is a living organism that is adapted to developing ideas and patterns. To regard the theatre as “alive” is to understand its ability to change, develop and transform. Just as actors breath meaning, life, and mobility into theatre objects, theatre spaces afford meaning to the event by generating a sense of place and

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6 Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, 102.

7 James Bau Graves, *Cultural Democracy: The Arts, Community and the Public Purpose*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 42.

8 Ibid., 63.

reflecting cultural and social values.

Traditionally, theatre architecture has been understood as fixed, essential, and monumental.<sup>9</sup> Traditional spatial arrangements are often imposed on the performance such as fixed seating and the raised proscenium stage. Alternative theatre practitioners, like Richard Schechner, have resisted conventional performance spaces by altering them, or abandoning them in an effort to break free of inflexible and restrictive theatre space. By removing a performance from its traditional confines, the performance boundaries are extended giving it a powerful energy, especially in relation to the dynamics of social engagement.

In *The Art of Time*, dramatic professor Michael Kirby provides us a definition of the idea of environment for the theatre. Theoretically, “environment” indicates the space around a person and anything occupying that space. Concretely, the environment refers to the particular world in which we live, “the aggregate of all the external conditions.”<sup>10</sup> The former refers most specifically to spatial considerations where the latter refers to a “theatre outside of theatres”.<sup>11</sup>

Further adding to the discussion is dramatic theorist Gay McAuley who regards performance space as a “complex social mechanism rather than an aesthetic object... not an empty container, but an active agent; it shapes what goes on within it, emits signals about it to the community at large,

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9 Darita Hannah, "Event-space: Theater Architecture & the Historical Avant-garde" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, New York University, 2006), 38.

10 Michael Kirby, *The Art of Time* (Toronto: Irwin and Clarke Company Ltd., 1965), 134.

11 Ibid.

and is itself affected.”<sup>12</sup>

Based on this framework, I would argue in this thesis proposal, that all elements surrounding theatrical performance must take into account the influences affecting the life and development of that performance using the materials (physical, cultural, social, political etc) that are of that community. This theatre, therefore, demands a building solution for the generation and re-generation of the performance environment based on varying environmental, social and cultural conditions. An understanding of the cultural processes that builds the identity of a place become crucial in providing a programme and an environment that will be considered inviting and inclusive.

### Traveling Theatre



Pageant wagon from the 15th century. From Oscar Brockett, *History of the Theatre*.

Before the advent of individual home entertainment, itinerant amusement brought relief to otherwise insular communities with infusions of excitement and activity. With roots dating back to the pageant wagons of the Middle Ages, the primary motivator of traveling shows was to invoke an engaged response in visited communities through a flexible and interactive programme. Audience involvement, processional performance, and performances in multiple spaces or environments was a component that contributed to the success and impact of the show.<sup>13</sup>



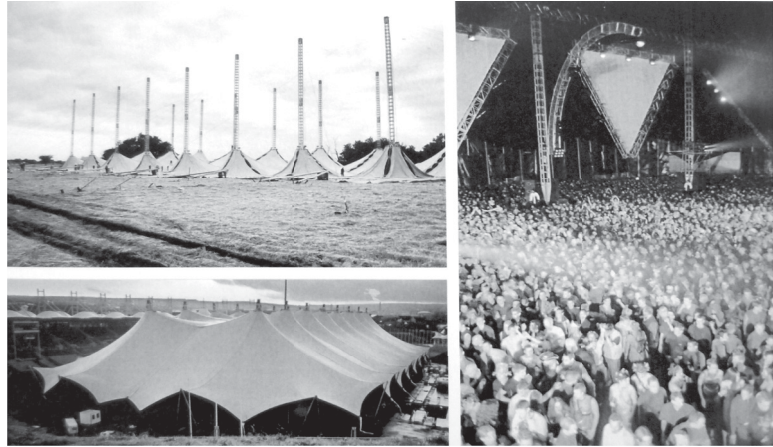
1930s circus arriving in town. From Awesome Stories.

Traveling theatre, circus, carnival, and festival guilds search for an architecture that is efficient, flexible and compact that can be assembled and disassembled with relative ease. This allows for the transformation of undistinguished tracts

<sup>12</sup> Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 92.

<sup>13</sup> Schechner, *Environmental Theater*, 10.

of land into ephemeral landscapes; the architecture acts as a mechanism for shaping, managing, and sustaining the reception of the event. “These ephemeral places embodied a willingness to engage desire and fantasy before it was expected as a civic right.”<sup>14</sup>



Deployment of the Valhalla festival tent. From Robert Kronenburg, *Portable Architecture*.

To this day, itinerant entertainment troupes gain creative inspiration through a greater perspective on the distinct cultural, historical and political identities that exist in a variety of places. Furthermore, mobility allows entertainers to expand their practice and experience through increased exposure and engagement with a wider public.

### **Nature as a Performative Backdrop**

As discussed, the theatre concerns itself with the generation of relationships; it is an environment that encompasses a series of interlocked systems – those of the performers, those of the spectators and those of the spaces that they occupy. Theatre then, as an ecological construct, cannot be ignored as ecology deals with the relation of organisms to

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Tobier, “From Learned Pigs to the Burning Man: Itinerant Amusement in America”, in *Transportable Environments: Theory, Context, Design and Technology*, ed. Robert Kronenburg (London: Routledge, 1998), 47.



one another and to their physical surroundings, including the natural environment.



Theatre of Epidauros. From Oscar. G. Brockett, *History of Theatre*.

In ancient Greek theatre, performances would occur in amphitheatres raked into the hillside, which enabled the city or landscape to be viewed as a backdrop by thousands of spectators. Occurring during the daytime, it was important for these natural amphitheatres to visually link the event to civic pride and responsibility. By subtly manipulating views, topography, and carefully introducing architectural elements, sequential experience of the site was highlighted and enhanced the rituals of arriving and gathering.



The Tiger Act, Our Domestic Resurrection Circus. From Robert Kronenburg, *Transportable Environments*.

By engaging people with the landscape beyond, performers and audiences are able to draw connections to a world larger than the one on stage. Nature, particularly as an active and highlighted part of the performance makes a new kind of theatre. “This is theatre that expresses its ecological agenda through deliberate, and heightened, engagement with the natural.”<sup>15</sup>

Mobile architecture coupled with a much more open relationship to the environment can provide a forum for adaptability, innovation community engagement, that re-engages a phenomenological relationship to nature.

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15 Sarah Standing, “Human/Nature: Eco-theatre Politics and Performance” (Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, New York University, 2008), 267.

## Case Study: Teatro del Mondo

An influential case study that addresses theatre in the context of mobility and cultural identity is Aldo Rossi's, Teatro Del Mondo, a floating theatre that drifted through the Venice waterways for the 1979-80 Biennale. The theatre was conceptualized as paying homage to floating theatres that consumed Venetian waterways during 18th century carnival and festival events. The theatre's simple form and bold colours were characteristic of Rossi's tendencies to abstract typological architectural elements.

Reiterated throughout his career was Rossi's idea that architecture provides a stage for life, with public spaces acting as backdrops for life's experiences; the theatre acting as a metaphor for his beliefs. Not only did his theatre provide a place for people to experience the performance but resulted in the audience becoming a part of the spectacle.



Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo on the Venetian waterfront. From Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi and 21 Works*.

Just as spectators formed the backdrop for the theatrical event, the city of Venice was drawn into the space by way of windows in the upper balconies. As the theatre moved through the water, the city remained as a constant presence

with the boats, the buildings and the water triggering both visual and physical senses. By placing the theatre in the water, and using a material palette that is of that place, Rossi celebrates the characteristics of Venice and re-emphasizes the water as an important social gathering space within a community.

## CHAPTER 2: SITE SELECTION

### Context: Lake of the Woods

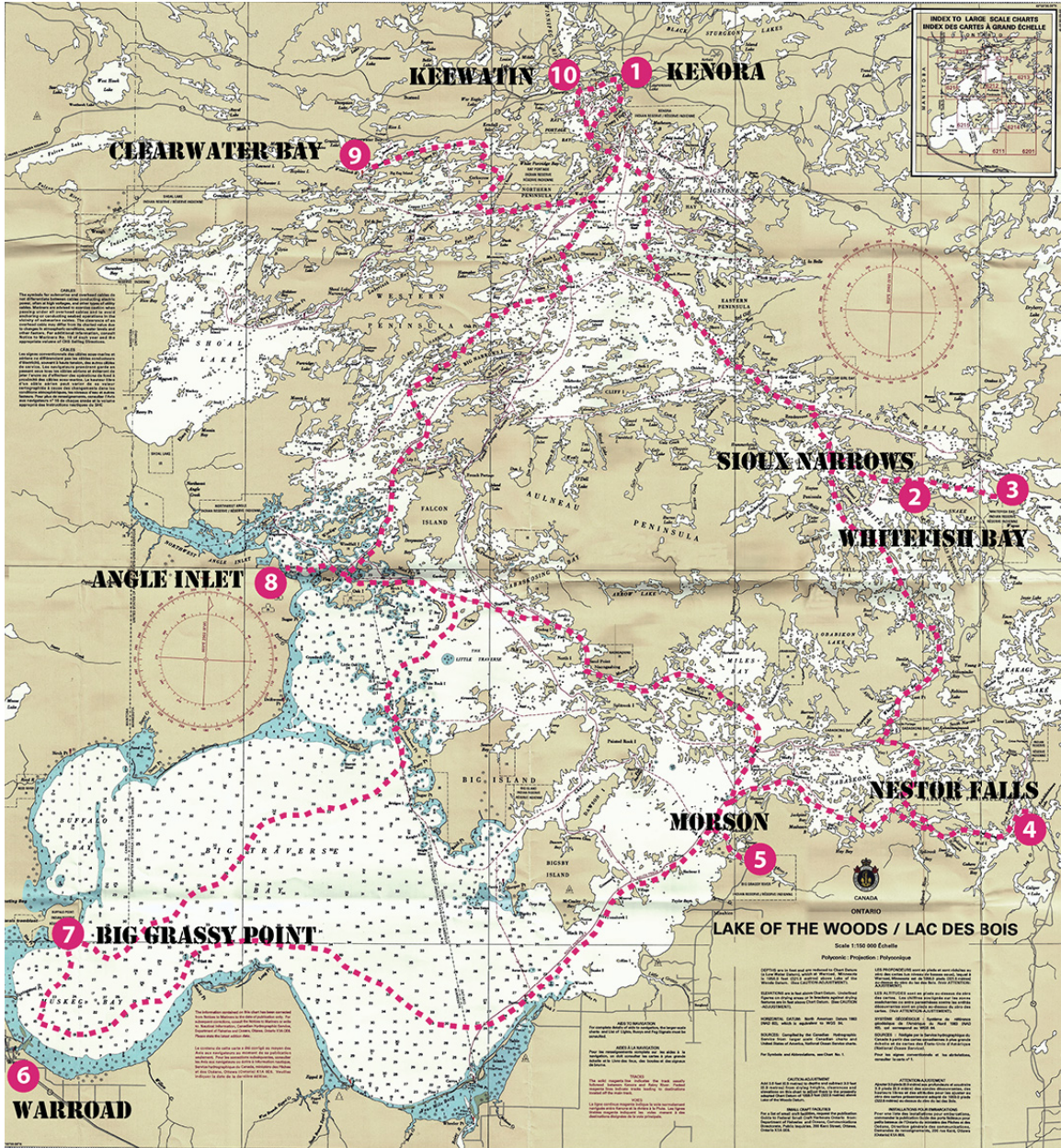
Lake of the Woods is an inland lake that sprawls 3,150 square kilometres over the wooded lands of the northwestern Ontario Canadian shield.



Key map locating Lake of the Woods in relation to 4 major city centres.

Beginning in the late 1600s, French fur traders set up camps in the Lake of the Woods area, initiating settlement and spawning cultural change within the area. Since then a number of distinct communities have developed along the shores of Lake of the Woods. Ranging in size, these communities are culturally complex and geographically isolated from each other and from larger city centres and their amenities.

The communities on Lake of the Woods have always been better navigated by water than by land. Since the earliest



- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1) Kenora         | 2) Sioux Narrows |
| 3) Whitefish Bay  | 4) Nestor Falls  |
| 5) Morson         | 6) Warroad       |
| 7) Buffalo Point  | 8) Angle Inlet   |
| 9) Clearwater Bay | 10) Keewatin     |

Key map of Lake of the Woods showing community relationships and tour route of the theatre. Base map from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

settlement, the waterways have been used as a primary resource for transportation, recreation and sustenance.

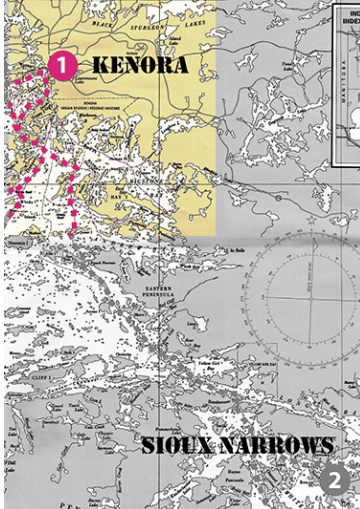
The connectivity that is provided by the water holds the key to celebrating a common heritage but also the social, cultural and geographical individuality of each community.



Collage study of the cultural industry on Lake of the Woods. The collage also shows the intersection of boat and theatre culture.

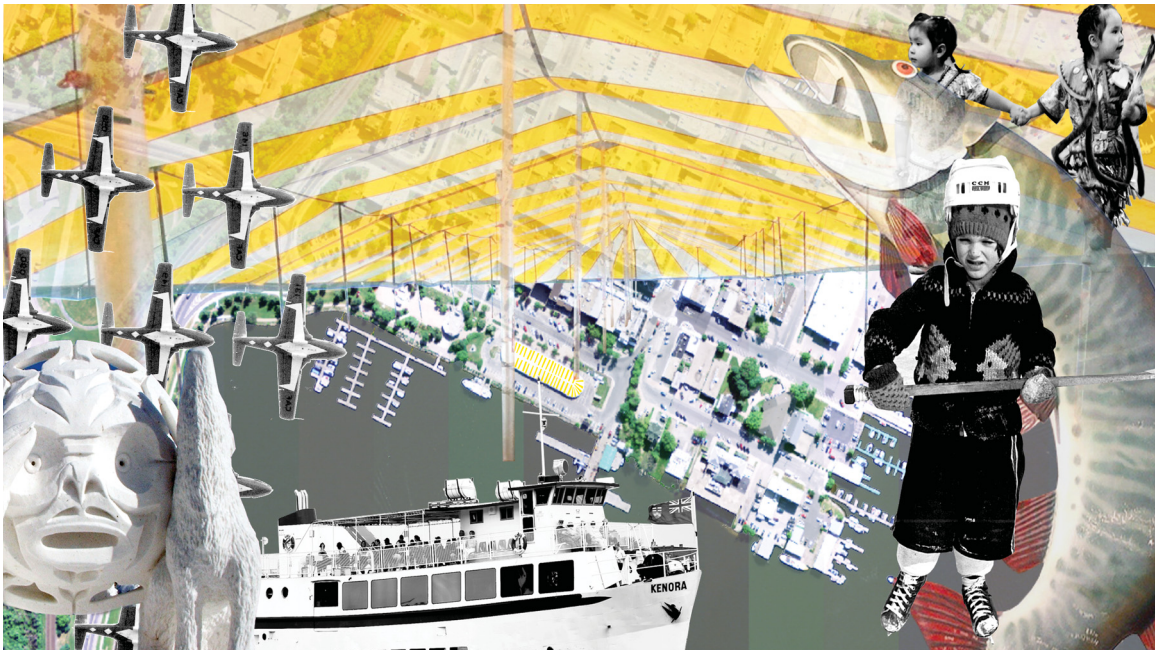
For the purposes of this study, attention will be focused on two contrasting sites on the lake; Kenora, as the urban landscape, and Sioux Narrows as the rural landscape.

## Urban Landscape: Kenora



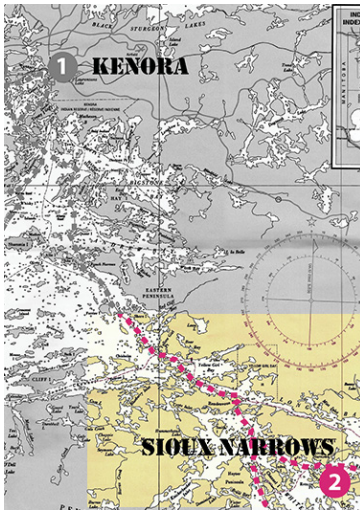
Map indicating location of Kenora in relation to Sioux Narrows. Base map from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Located on the northeast quadrant of Lake of the Woods, the City of Kenora is a community of approximately 17,000 residents and is the largest populace on the lake. Full of rich culture and heritage, Kenora has become a gateway location. As a summer destination, Kenora thrives with its population nearly tripling with an influx of daytrippers, weekend tourists, and cottagers; this makes Kenora an excellent hub and winter docking place for the mobile theatre.



Site collage illustrating seasonal activities on the Kenora waterfront.

## Rural Landscape: Sioux Narrows



Sioux Narrows, Ontario is a small resort community located on the eastern shoreline of Lake of the Woods, 75km south of Kenora. There are roughly 750 permanent residents, and nearly double that in the summer time when cottagers from Ontario, Manitoba, and the United States come for vacation. Tourism is the primary industry, with many resorts in the nearby vicinity.

Map indicating location of Sioux Narrows in relation to Kenora. Base map from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



Site collage illustrating summer activities on the Sioux Narrows waterfront.





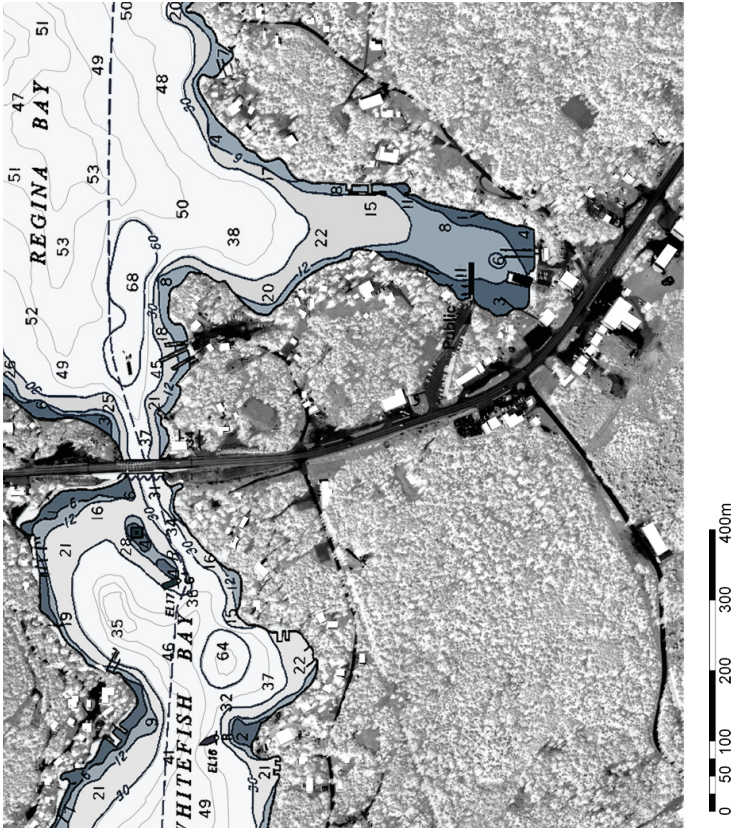
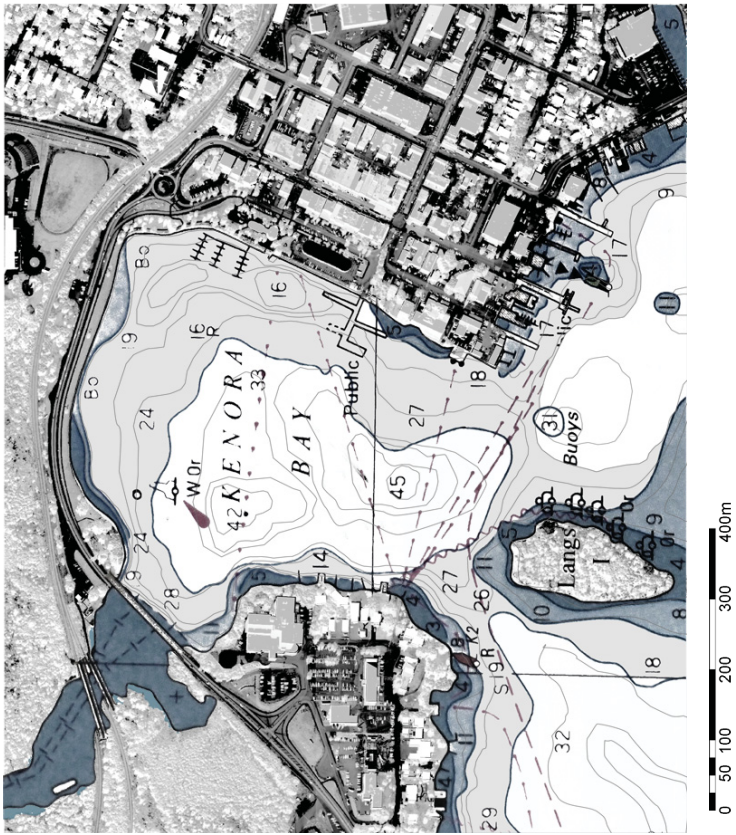
Aerial photographs of Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right) illustrating difference in urban landscape. Aerial photographs, number, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

## **Docking Analysis**

Since the program exists on the water, a set of criteria has been developed that could be mapped onto each community to determine the most appropriate docking site. They are:

- 1) water depth and shoreline topography
- 2) site circulation
- 3) public access to waterfront
- 4) connection to marine services
- 5) waterfront relationship to urban fabric

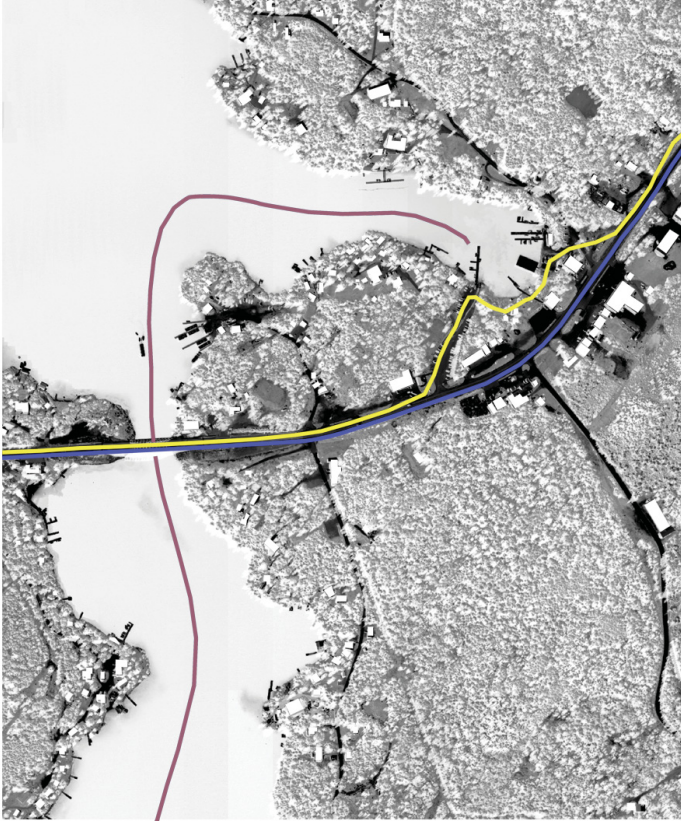
This proposal focuses specifically on the Kenora and Sioux Narrows waterfronts as case study.



Analysis of water depth and shoreline topography in Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right). Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



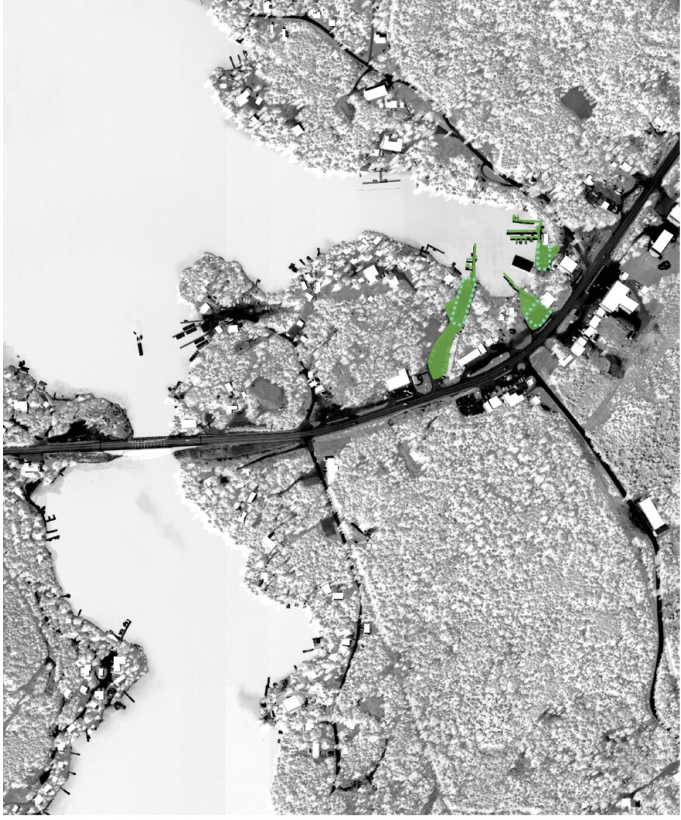
- TRANS-CANADA**
- CP RAILWAY**
- PEDESTRIAN ACCESS**
- BOAT ACCESS**



Site circulation in Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right).  
 Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



**PUBLIC WATERFRONT**  
**OPEN-SPACE**

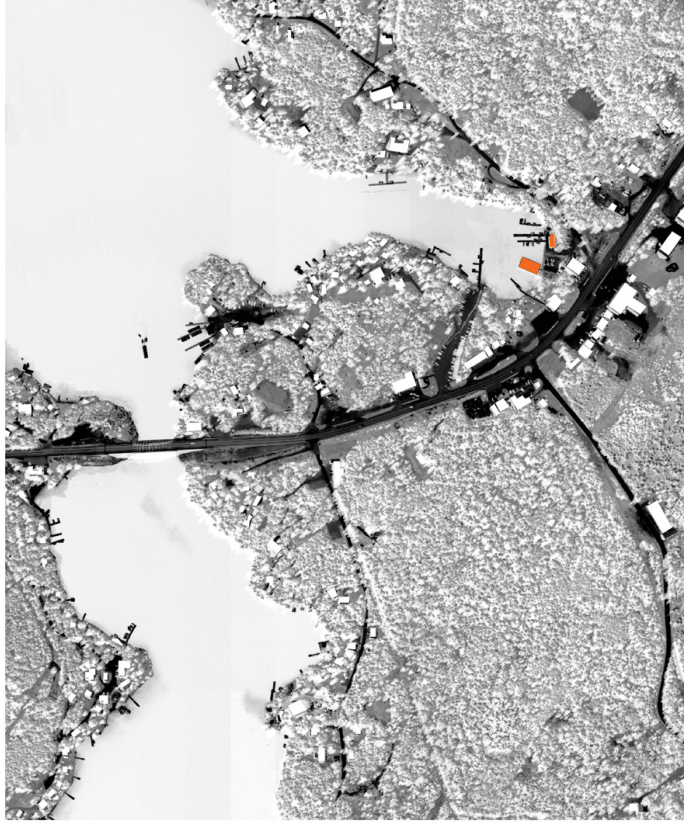


Public access and open-space along the waterfront in Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right).  
 Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



0 50 100 200 300 400m

**MARINE SERVICES**



0 50 100 200 300 400m

Location of marine services in Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right).  
Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



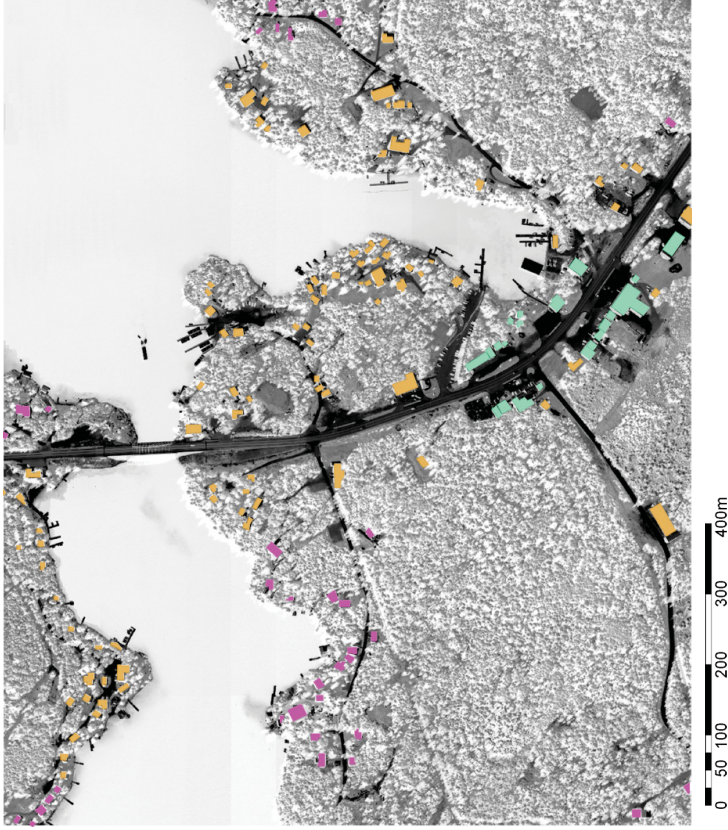
**PRIMARY COMMERCIAL**



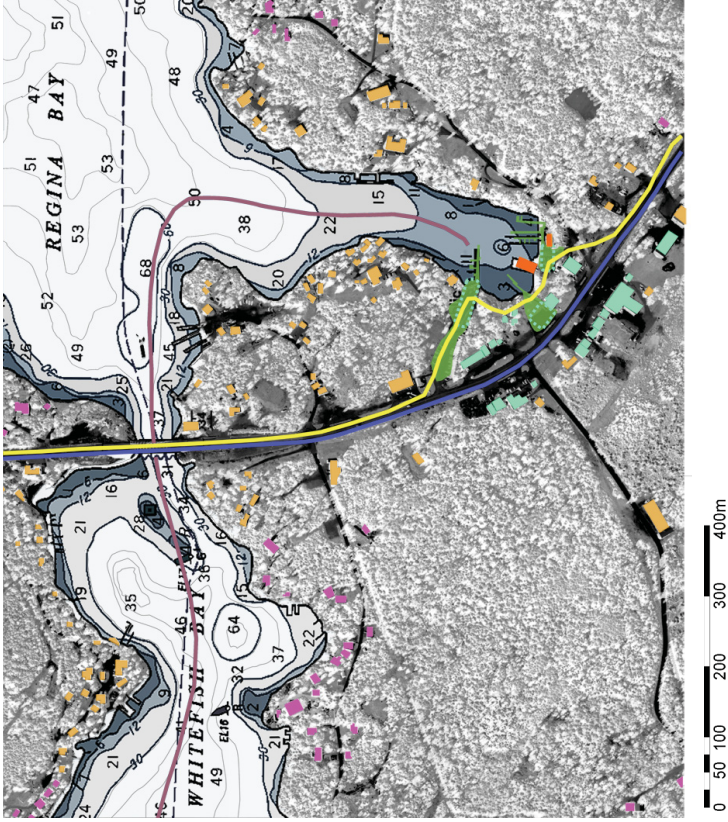
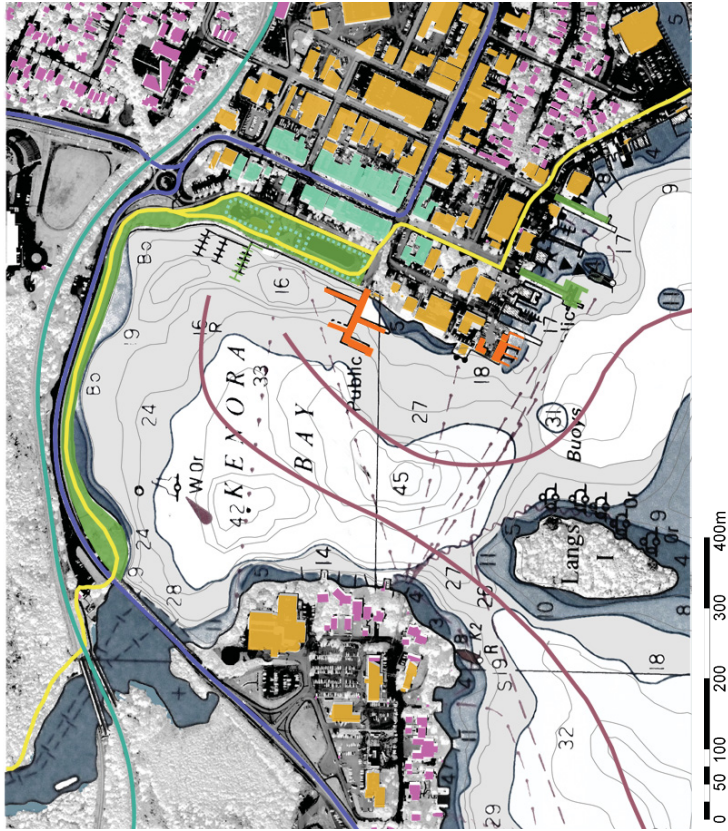
**SECONDARY COMMERCIAL**



**RESIDENTIAL**



Analysis of urban relationships in Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right).  
 Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



Layered analysis indicating ideal docking site in Kenora (left) and Sioux Narrows (right).  
 Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



## CHAPTER 3: PROGRAMME



script development



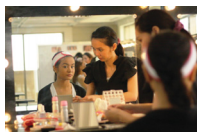
scenery/set design



costume design



promotion



make-up design



lighting design



sound design

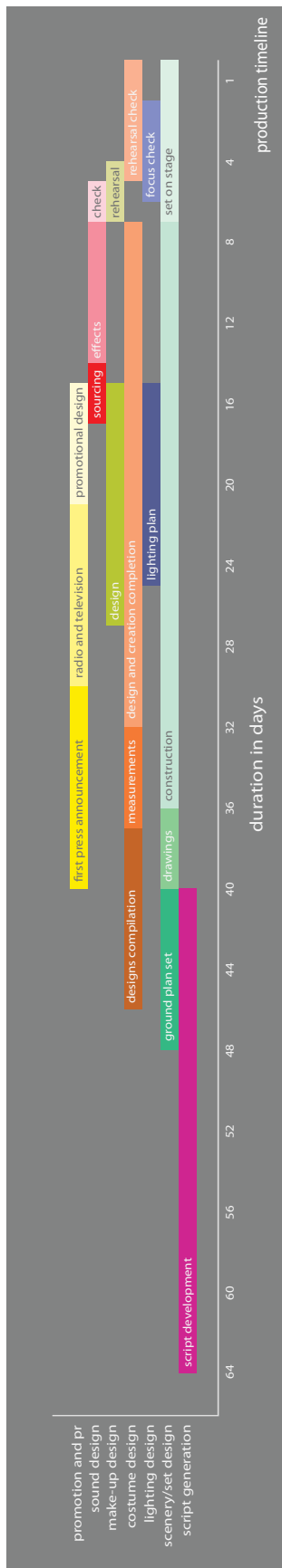
The programme of the floating theatre is intended to span an entire summer season. The theatre is commissioned at the beginning of the summer, which allows that season's participating community to explore the world of theatre, from conception to completion. Once the production is complete, the barge allows the community to navigate and port at neighbouring towns along Lake of the Woods waterfront, giving public performances of their theatrical creation.

Integral to the programme is the educational component that encourages community members to observe and partake in theatre production. A kit-of-parts provides the tools required for communities to generate and execute their own theatre, including script development, set design, costume and make-up design, sound, lighting, and multimedia. The act of production, much like the act of performance, is integral to the overall theatrical experience.

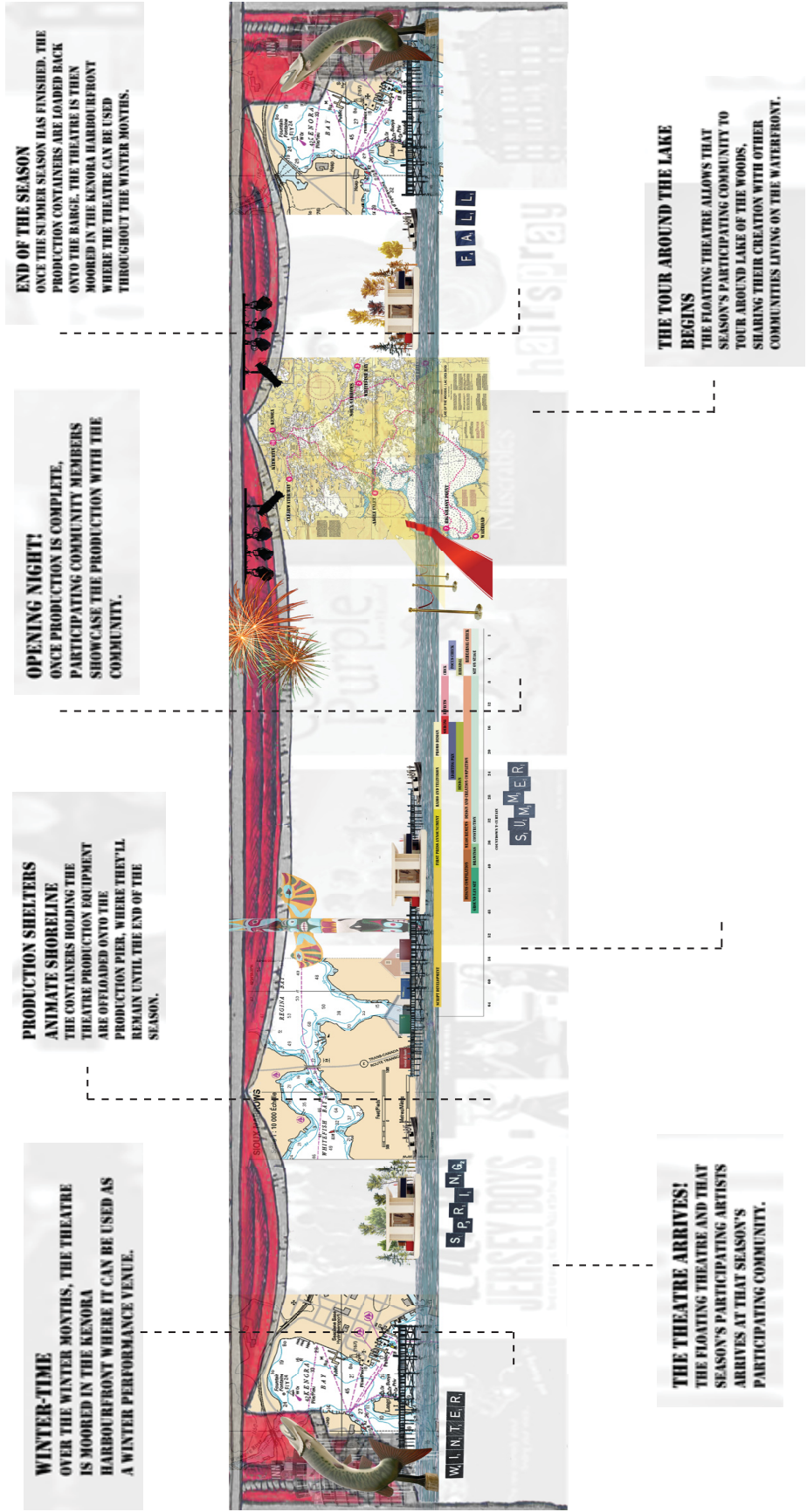
Much like a boat requires a crew, the theatre requires a team of personnel that understand and direct the inner workings of the theatre process. Part of the programme, then, is an artist residence that accommodates 6-8 professionals who specialize in each area of theatre production. This opportunity allows artists to gain a new perspective and further their own practice, drawing from a more integrated community exchange .

Facilitating the programme are a small theatre space, production facilities, dressing and green rooms, lobby and bar, and artists residences for 6-8 artists in-residence.

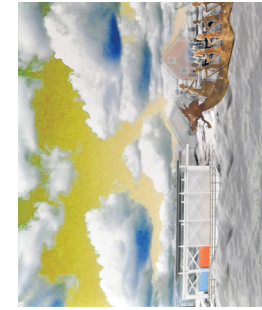
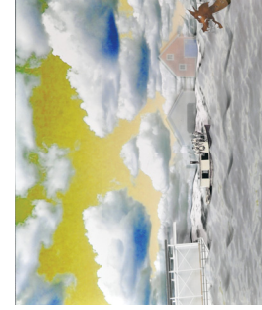
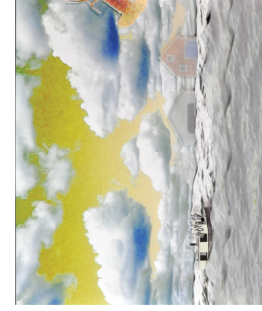
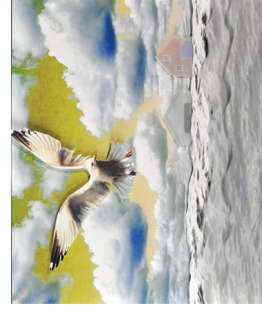
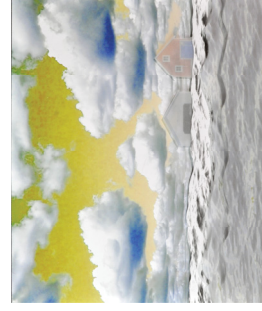
Key theatre personnel required for production.



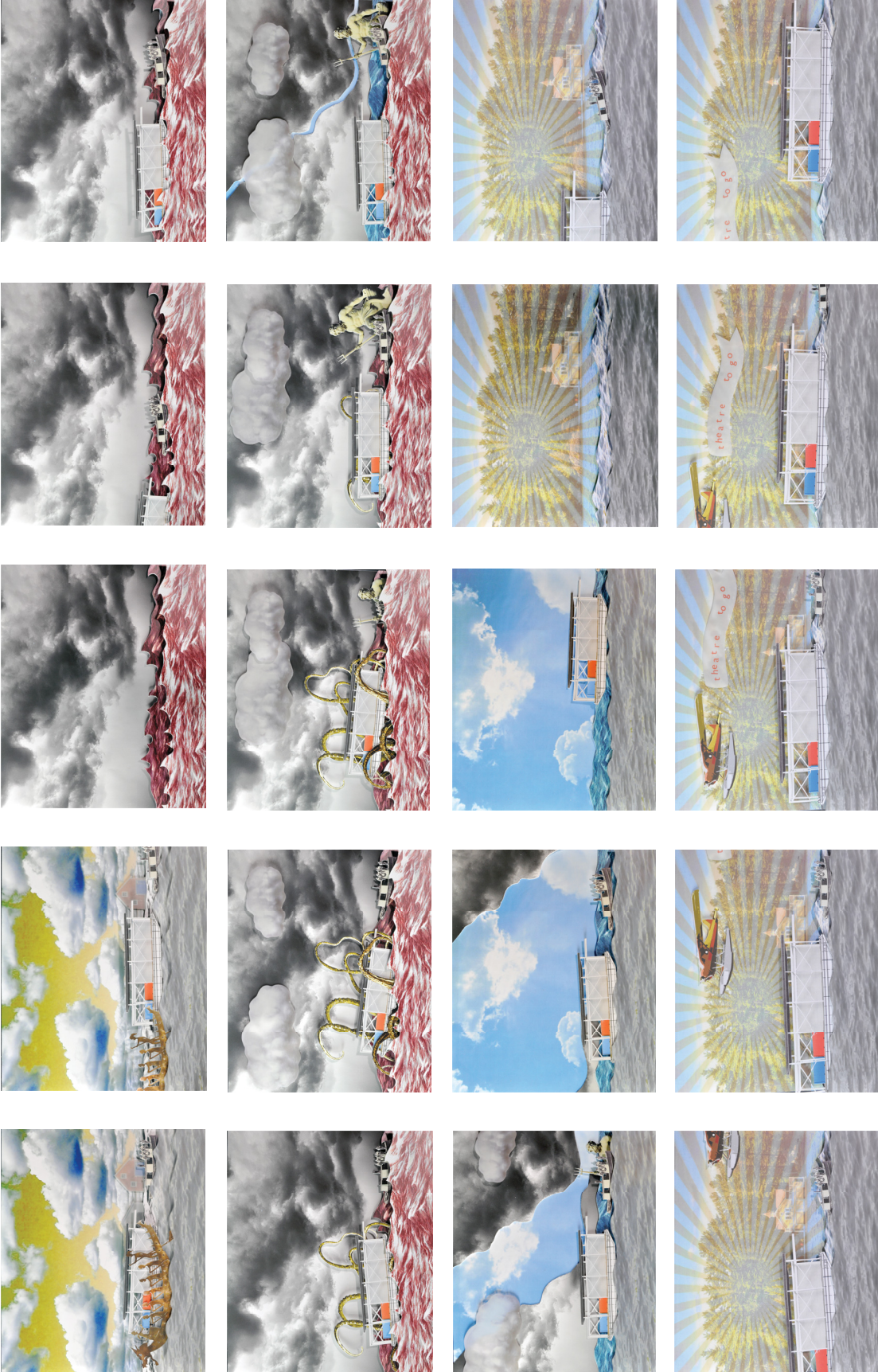
Theatre production timeline.



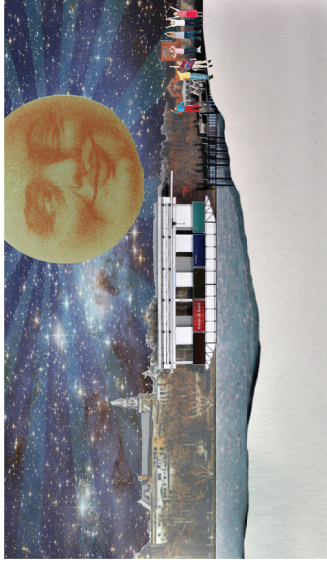
Seasonal timeline tracing the various stages of the programme from spring to fall.



Video stills from an early-concept stop-motion video highlighting the idea of the theatre's dynamic journey through Lake of the Woods.



Video stills from an early-concept stop-motion video highlighting the idea of the theatre's dynamic journey through Lake of the Woods.



Video stills from an early-concept stop-motion video highlighting the idea of the theatre's dynamic journey through Lake of the Woods. Propel, Produce, Perform: Stop motion.

## CHAPTER 4: DESIGN

### Collage as Narrative

Alternative theatre deals with reframing and/or re-contextualizing the ordinary to create new relationships, understandings, and experiences. Furthermore, the alternative theatre environment is generated through a series of spatial, temporal, and transformative procedures. Theatre, as discussed here, isn't hierarchical in its relationships but rather is understood as the culmination of the relationships that it establishes.

Collage, like alternative theatre, is a practice that promotes a new kind of interaction and generates a new set of relationships through the (re)combination of separate elements. Through a series of compositional, pictorial and transformative procedures, collage can reveal an impression of space and volume. Likewise, the relationships between the component parts of the collage actively engage viewers by encouraging them to interpret these relationships.

In order to convey the narrative of these relationships in a compelling way, collage is used as a way of evaluating, re-contextualizing, and representing the ways in which we engage with the theatre environment. The process of collage is then applied to generate an architecture based on the relationship of its parts rather than an overriding concept or form.

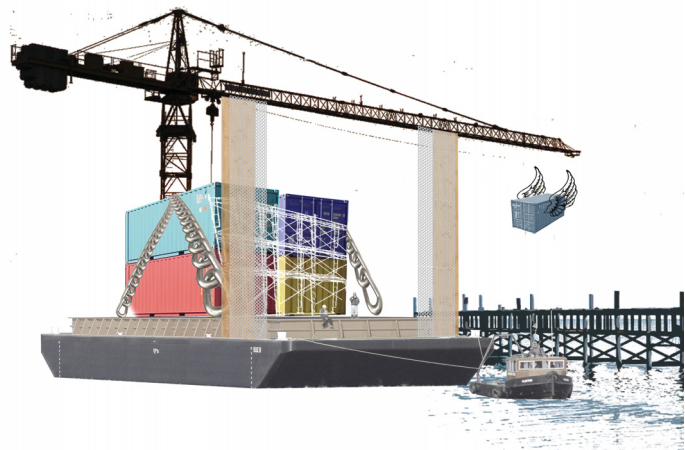
## Kit of Parts

William J. Mitchell, in an article entitled *A House is a Robot for Living In*, states that in systems of rigid moving parts, like most mechanical buildings and systems, parts are related to each other in just four basic ways:

Some are rigidly connected, some are constrained to slide past each other, some are constrained to rotate around points or axes and some like bees in a bottle move in unconstricted ways.<sup>16</sup>

What this suggests is a hierarchy of flexibility that can be incorporated into an architecture language used to develop a variety of spatial relationships.

The key programmatic aspect of the project is how the theatre embodies a flexibility that can be adapted to the individuality of a unique community. By providing a kit-of-parts that focuses on these four basic relationships, an architectural language is developed that is recognizable at an urban scale yet flexible enough to allow for individual creative exploration by the communities. The parts in the kit range from being more permanent to completely adaptable.



Concept collage of kit-of-parts.

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<sup>16</sup> William J. Mitchell, "A House is a Robot," in *More Mobile: Portable Architecture for Today*, ed. Jennifer Seigal (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 15.

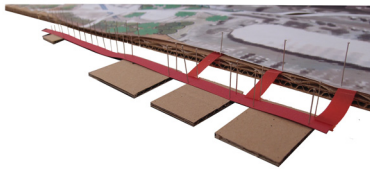


The kit-of-parts is comprised of the pier, the barge, the fixed container, the crane, the mobile container, the panel and scaffold. Each community is able to engage with the components of the kit to develop their own distinct theatre experience. The orchestration of these elements together, reflects the spirit of alternative theatre, creating a series of unique and flexible spaces that are used by both performers and spectators.



Kit-of-parts grouped in order from most fixed to most flexible.

## Production Pier



Sketch model of the production pier.

Specific to the scale of each community, the production piers in Kenora and Sioux Narrows are designed with site activity in mind, turning the waterfront into a theatrical staging ground; a place to see and be seen. It's here that community members can gather, socialize and engage with theatre production.

The pier, becomes the connection to the shore and the extension of the lobby space and acts as a threshold between city and lake. The shoreline is transformed into a highly theatrical environment by a festival overlay on the ordinary functional architecture of the waterfront. Like an informal auditorium, spectators are free to participate, watch or disregard theatre production, creating a relationship that is much more fluid and dynamic.

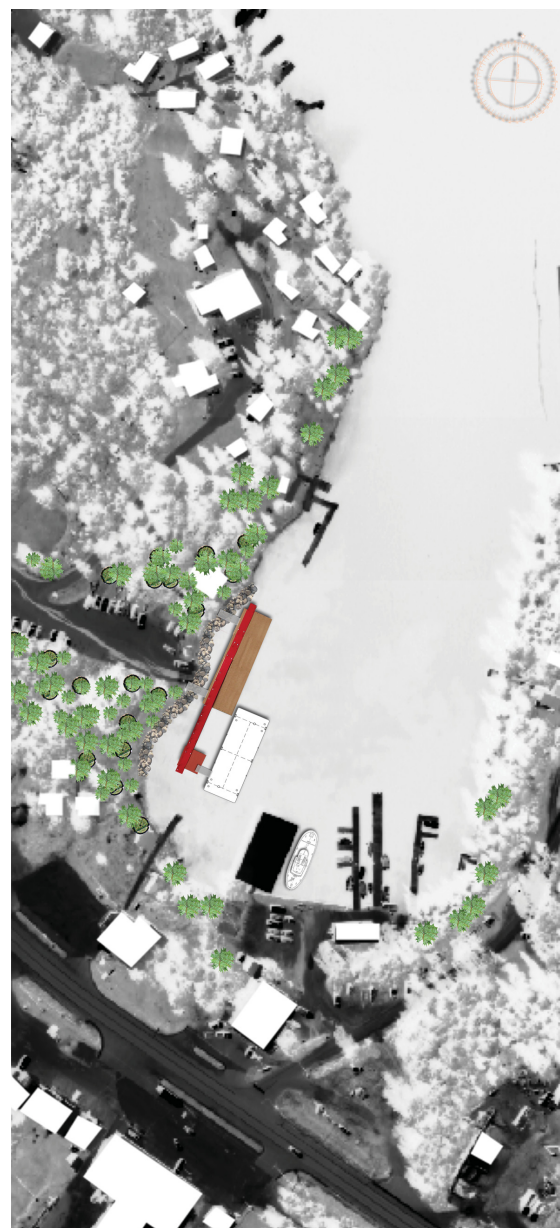


Diagram showing the production pier as extension of the lobby space and the threshold between city and lake.



**KENORA WATERFRONT - PROPOSED PIER**

0 5 10 25 50m



**SIOUX NARROWS WATERFRONT - PROPOSED PIER**

0 5 10 25 50m

Aerial diagrams indicating the proposed piers on the Kenora waterfront (left) and the Sioux Narrows waterfront (right). Base photographs, numbers 2015390055100 and 2015420054700, courtesy of Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

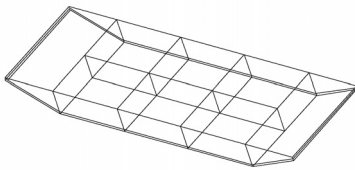


Looking down the production pier towards the theatre at the Kenora waterfront.

## Barge



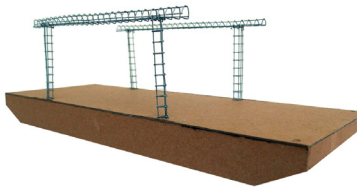
Sketch model of the barge.



Drawing showing barge structure.

Since the communities of Lake of the Woods have always been better navigated by water than by land, the barge is one of the most important components of the theatre. Not only does it act as transportation, but it serves as the building foundation. The barge is a standard flat deck construction with a single hull. The structure of the barge runs from hull to deck and is comprised of a series of steel trusses. Steel angles are welded to the tops of these trusses to support the steel deck, making it an ideal foundation to support construction.

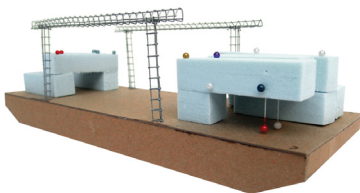
## Mast and Boom



Sketch model of the building super structure; the mast and boom.

The super structure of the building combines the structural principles of both a sailboat mast and the mast of a crane. The mast columns puncture through the deck of the barge, providing lateral stability and offering access to building services located in the hull. The boom provides, not only the support for the crane, but is used for hanging lighting, and sound equipment.

## Fixed Container



Sketch model of the fixed containers on the barge deck.

A large portion of the architecture is comprised of standard shipping containers. Not only are shipping containers an icon of mobility but the railway has been a major cultural driver on Lake of the Woods.

Using a modular system, three standard sizes of freight containers were chosen to suite the scope of the corresponding programme. The fixed containers on the barge are programmed to include both front and back of house activities and also house the artist residences. The

containers are stacked and organized to create a dynamic relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces. Fixing the containers on the barge deck provides stability when the theatre is on the water as they function as ballast.

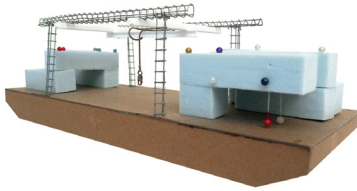


View of the fixed containers on the barge that house backstage amenities, including dressing and green rooms, and control booth.



View of the fixed containers on the barge that facilitate front-of-house amenities on the first floor, including lobby and box office, and artist residences above.

## Crane



Sketch model of the crane, which is attached to the underside of the boom.

The crane is an important component of barge vernacular. Similarly, the fly tower is instrumental in generating the majesty and spectacle of the theatre world. With relative ease, both mechanisms provide flexibility and maneuverability of heavy elements. Incorporated into the design of the theatre space is telescoping overhead gantry crane that functions as both crane and fly tower.

The crane is used to off-load the mobile production containers onto the production pier. The crane can also be used by the community to easily erect, change and tear down sets. The gantry crane has maneuverability in both vertical and horizontal directions, allowing it to serve the entire theatre space, regardless of seating and stage arrangements.

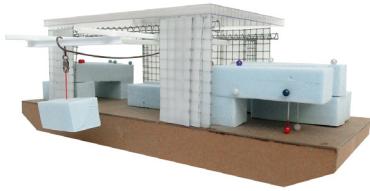


The crane as it extends over the production pier to pick up a heavy piece of set design.



The crane as it moves the set inside the theatre space.

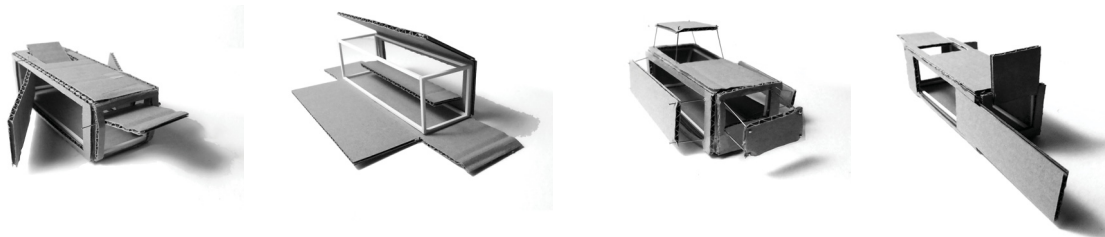
## Mobile Container



Sketch model of the crane off-loading a mobile container.

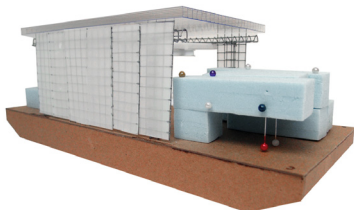
The mobile production containers house the tools required for communities to generate their own set design, costume design, make-up design, sound and lighting, and multimedia. Based on the corresponding programme, each container “opens” in a unique way to extend it’s function.

To facilitate the space requirements dictated by the scope of this production activity, these mobile containers are off-loaded from the barge and deployed, becoming temporary production shelters along the shoreline. Just as theatrical scenery changes based on its context, the mobile containers function as a set design; an interactive backdrop for production.



Studies showing the flexibility of the shipping container facade to allow for increased floor and wall area, allowing for flexibility in programming.

## Panel



Sketch model of the theatre facade panels.

Stage design can be reduced or summed up as a simple facade, acting as partition, veil, perforation, and gateway to the majestic world of theatre.

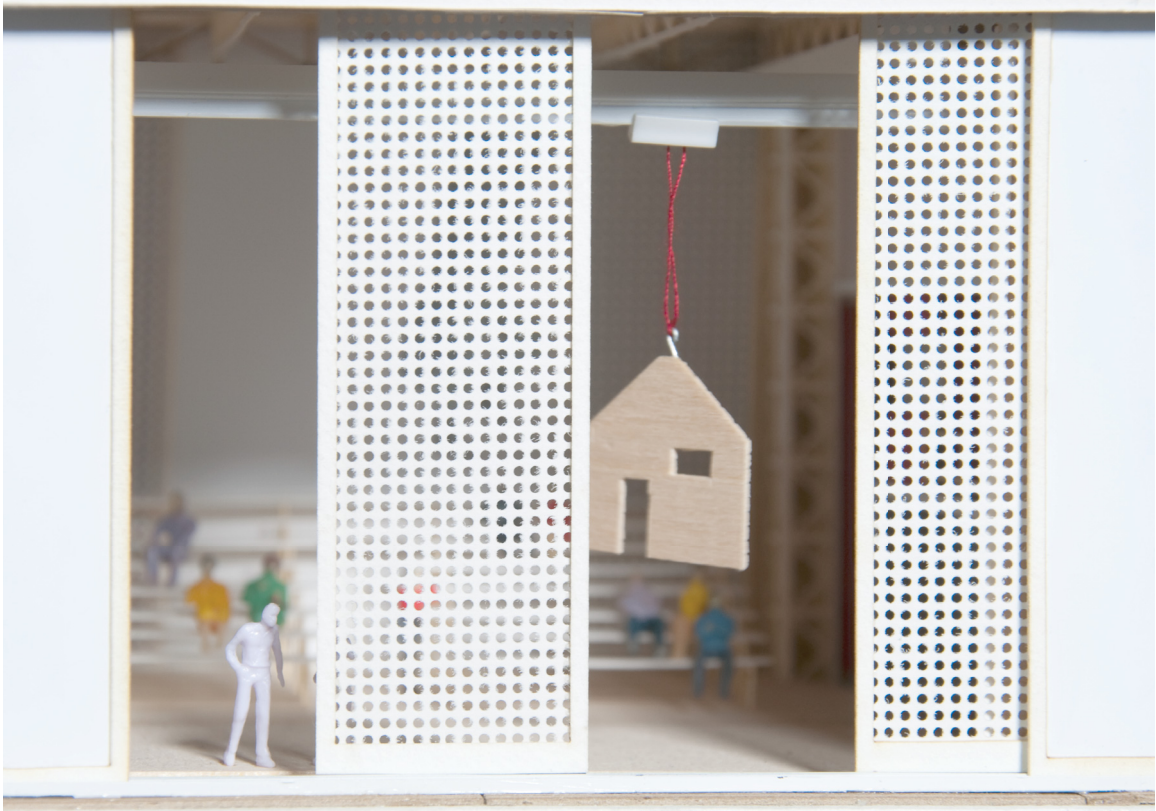
The theatre facade then, like a stage set, creates a permeable border between interior and exterior. A series of layered



panels allow the theatre walls to be shifted to allow for variation in backdrop, lighting, ventilation and borrowed landscape.

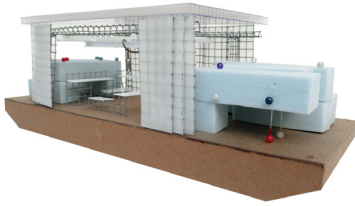
Layered panels allow for a sense of flexibility and openness of space to enrich and support the variety of spatial and theatrical experiences.

Rather than eradicating natural spectacles such as natural vistas, native topography and vegetation, these uncorrographed elements are celebrated as a part of the experience, furthering the connection to the environment; where the crickets, loons and fireflies and stars become part of the score.



The panels in one of many configurations, mediating the boundary of the theatre facade and the natural environment.

## Scaffold



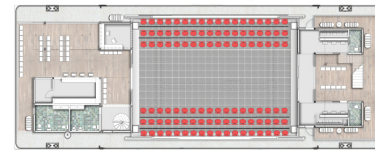
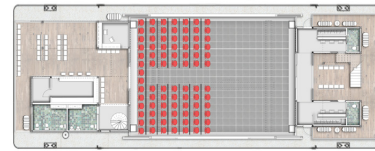
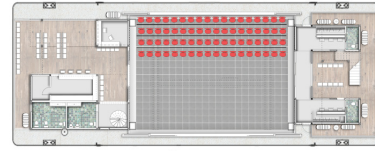
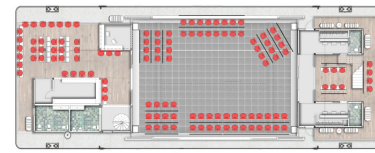
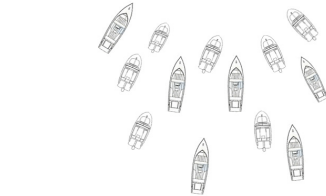
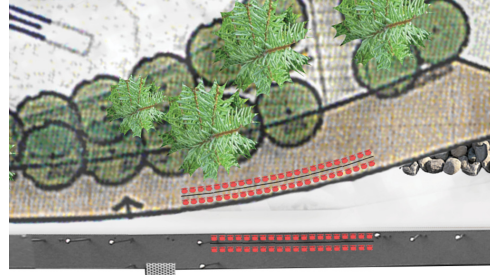
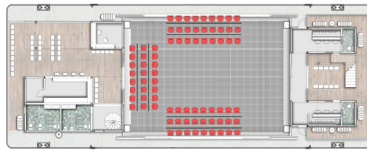
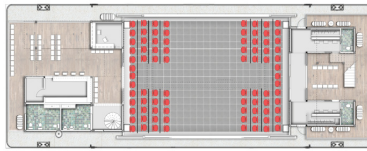
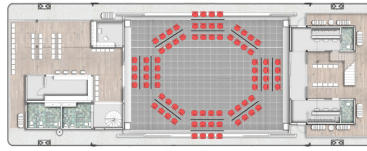
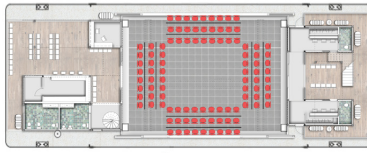
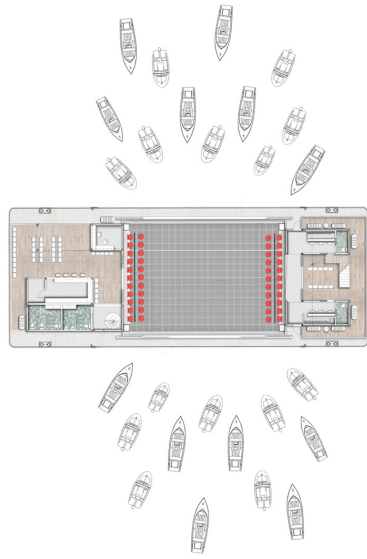
Sketch model of a scaffold configuration inside the theatre space.

The scaffold is the most flexible component in the kit-of-parts. Scaffolding has a skeletal quality upon which one can begin to imagine an infinite number of layered adaptations, generating a new set of relationships between seating/set and performer/spectator. The scaffolding then becomes so much more than seating as it evolves into sculpture, set and architecture.

By providing flexible seating, communities have the ability to arrange the theatre space to suit their needs. Based on the size of the community, the seating can be erected to generate an intimate and engaged theatre experience catered specifically to the target audience.



The interior of the theatre space with the scaffold seating configured in a proscenium-style relationship to the stage.



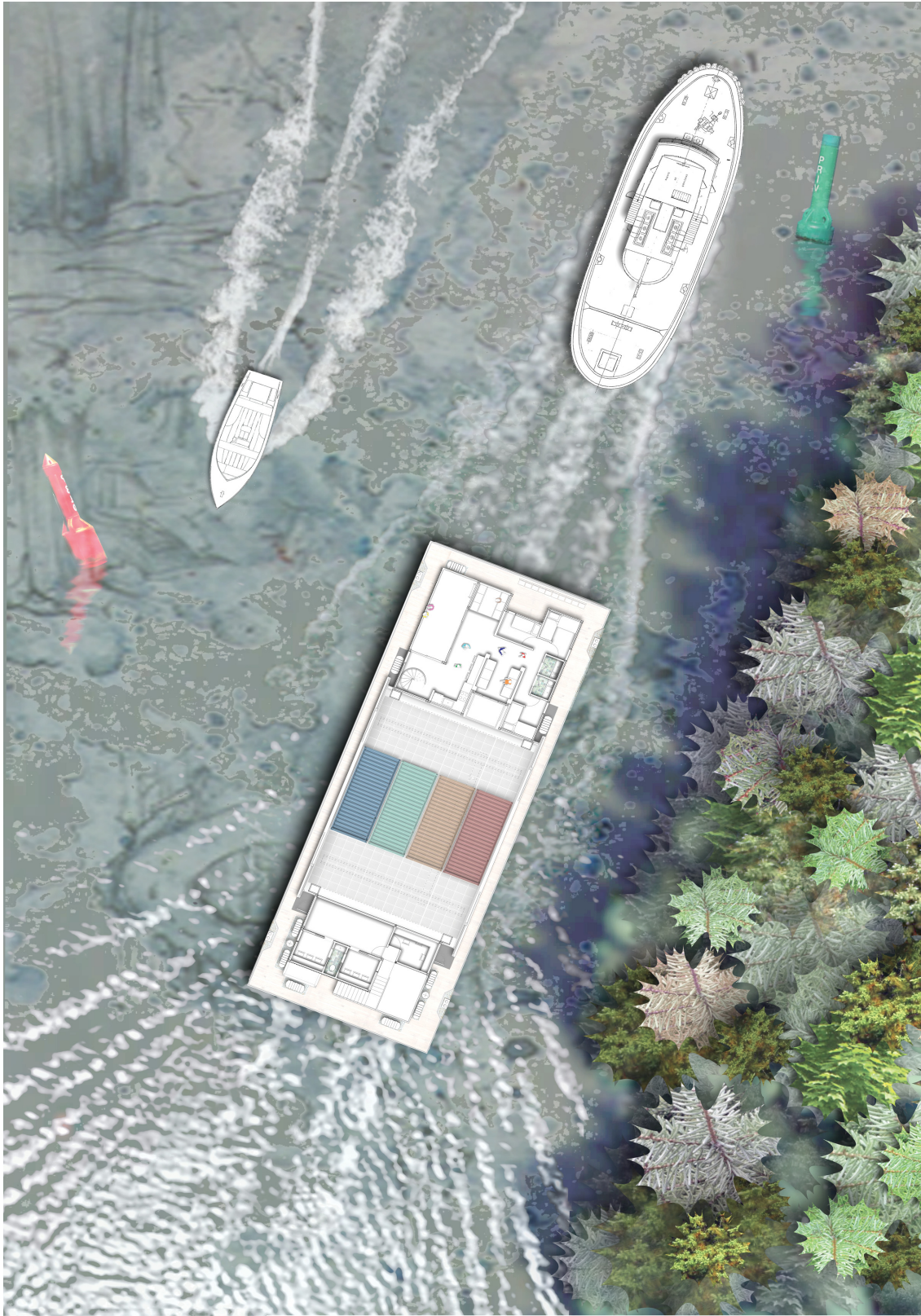
Diagrams demonstrating flexibility and adaptability of scaffold seating arrangements in and outside the theatre space.

## **Final Design: Theatre to-go**

### **Propell!**

At the beginning of the summer, the theatre is packed up and prepared for a new season. Along with that summer's participating artists, the theatre is tugged through the waterways of Lake of the Woods.

In the meantime, anticipation builds as that season's participating community prepares for the arrival of the theatre, an exciting event that prompts community involvement and cooperation.



0 2 5 10 15m

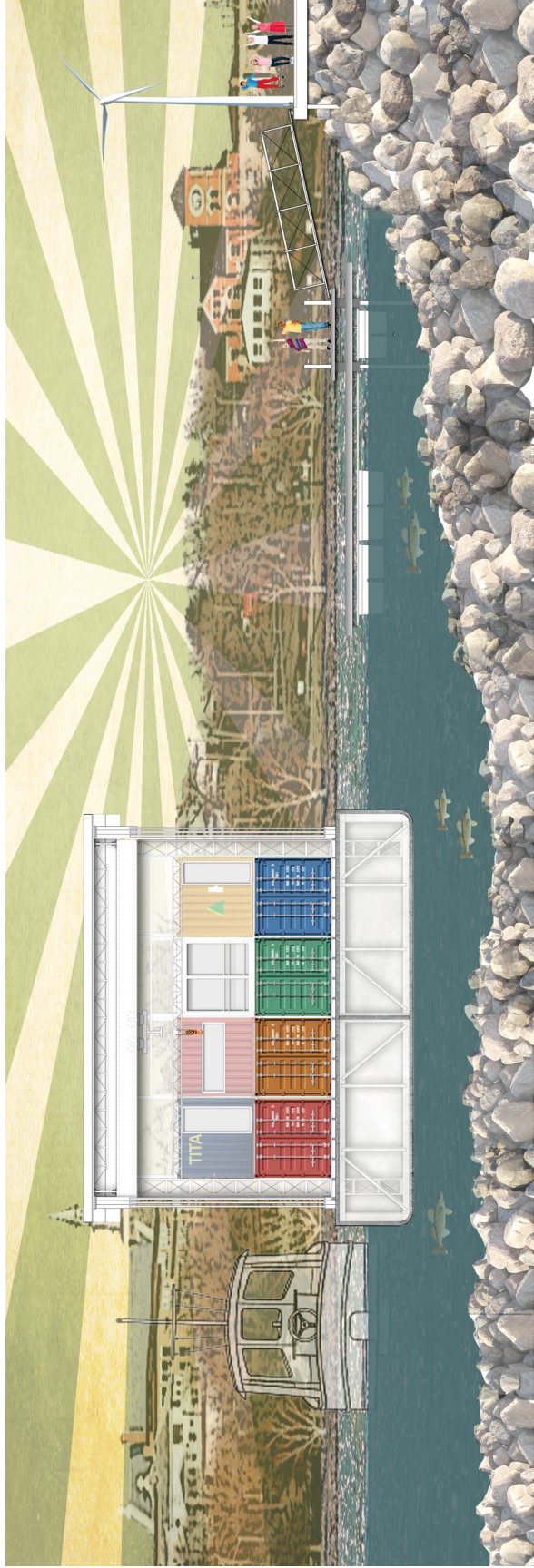
The theatre being tugged at the beginning of the season to that season's participating community. Second-level floor plan.



Concept collage of the theatre coming to town.



The theatre being tugged into port.



Cross-section of theatre coming into port at the beginning of the season, with the production containers loaded on the barge deck.  
 Arrival sequence - part one of three.



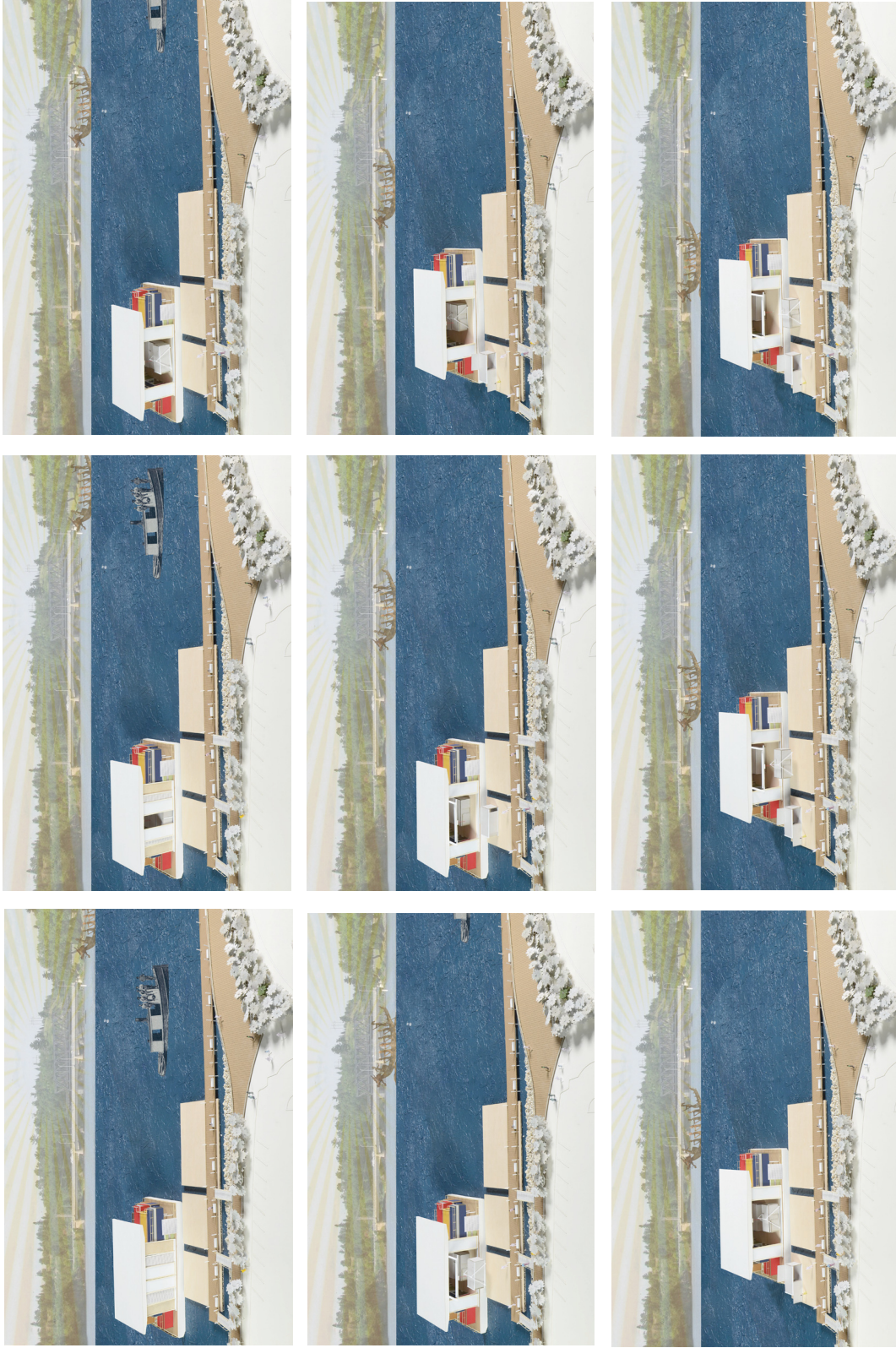
0 1 2 5 10 15m

Cross-section of theatre barge. Crane is off-loading mobile production containers onto the production pier.  
 Arrival sequence - part two of three.

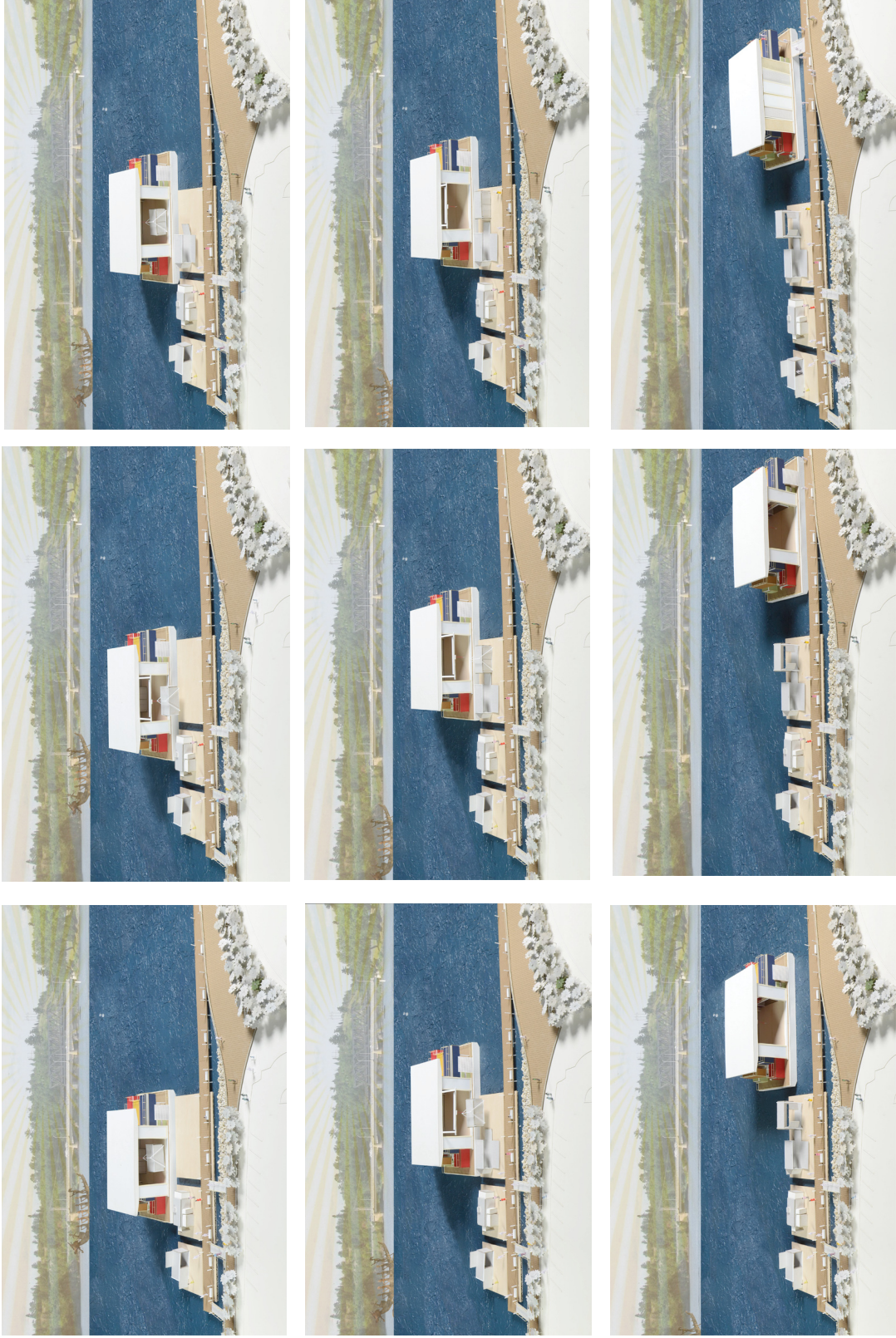




Cross-section of theatre barge during a community celebration, showing lobby space and the connection and extension onto the pier. Arrival sequence - part three of three.



Video stills from a stop-motion video showing the deployment sequence of the mobile containers onto the production pier.

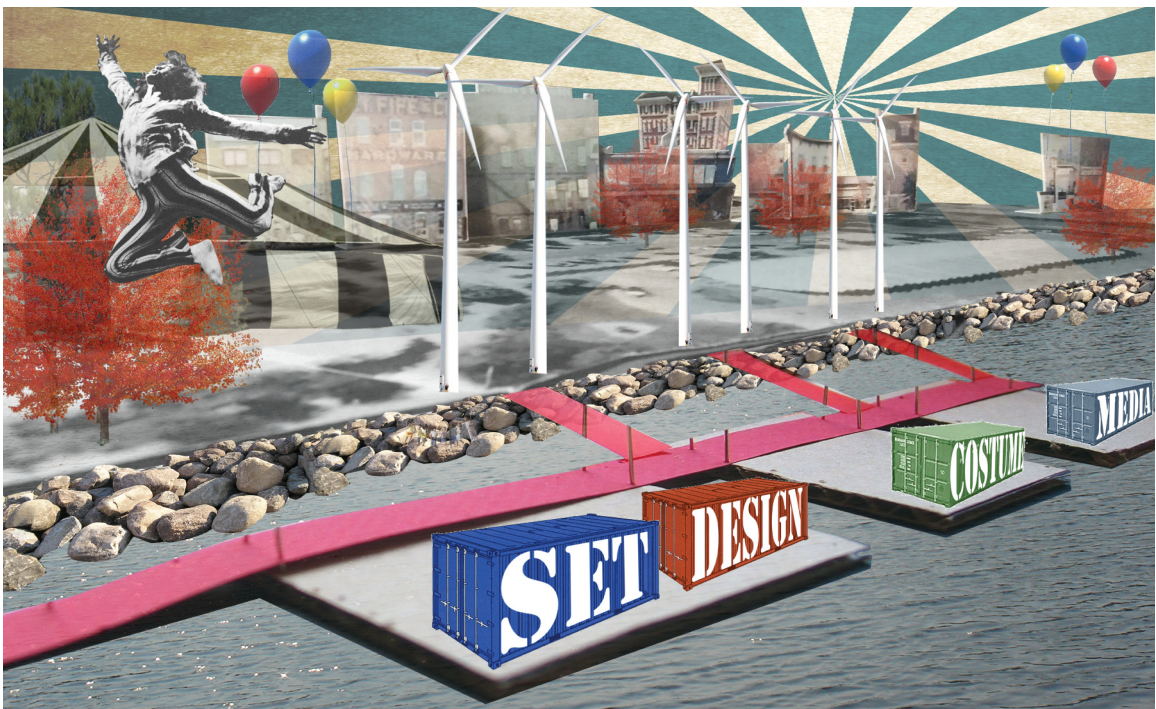


Video stills from a stop-motion video showing the deployment sequence of the mobile containers onto the production pier.  
Propel, Produce, Perform: Deployment sequence.

## Produce!

Once the theatre arrives, the mobile production containers are off-loaded and deployed onto the production pier, becoming temporary production shelters along the shoreline.

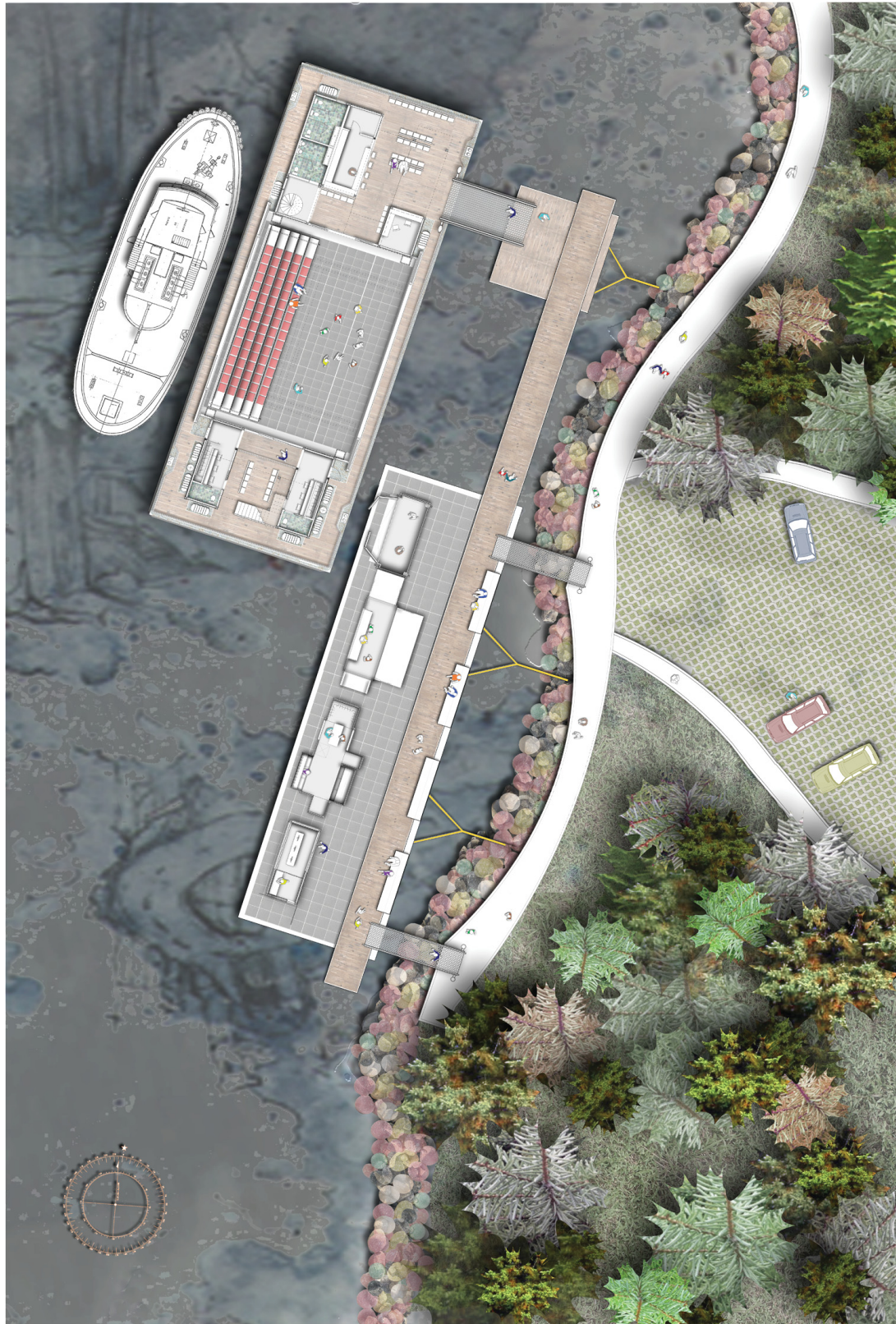
Just as theatrical scenery changes based on its context, this mobile architecture functions as a set design; an interactive backdrop for production. The act of production much like the act of performance then becomes integral to the overall theatrical experience



Concept collage showing programmed containers along the production pier.



The mobile production containers deployed on the production pier.



0 1 2 5 10 15m

The theatre and production containers at the production pier on the Sioux Narrows waterfront. Deck Level floor plan.

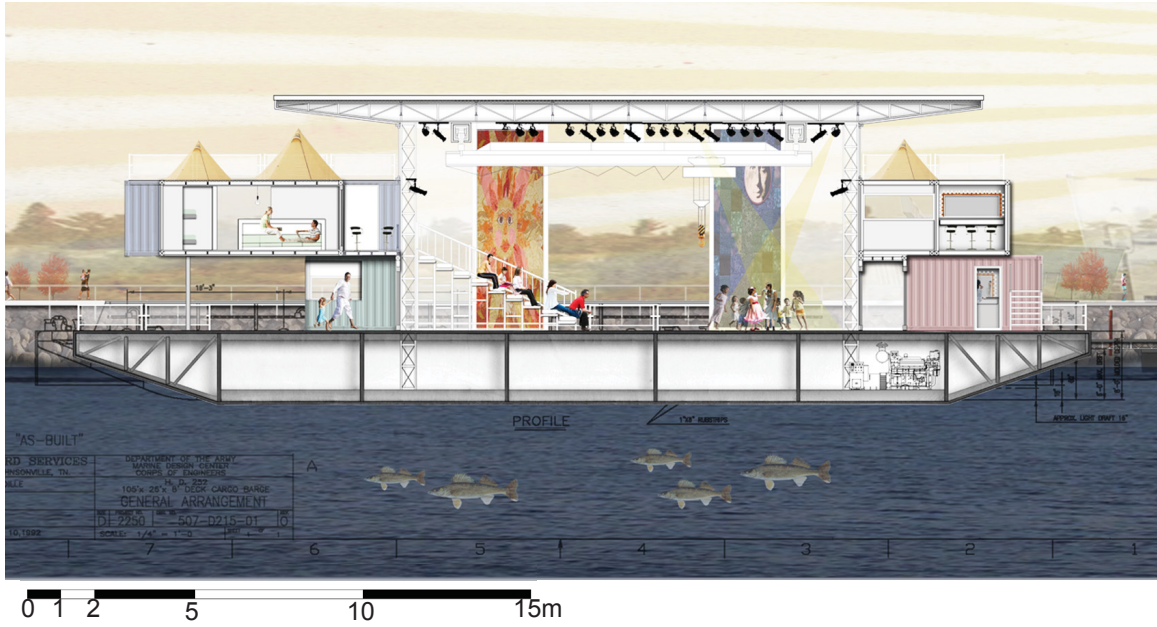


Model of theatre, production pier and mobile production containers looking towards the shoreline.

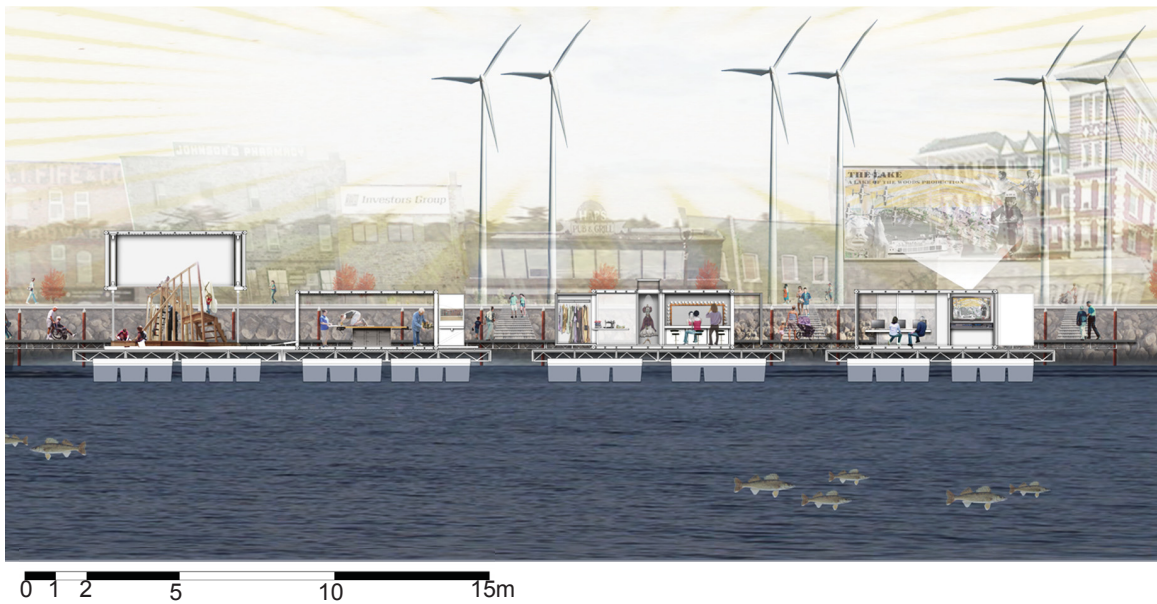


Long-section showing relationship and promenade between the theatre, production pier and the mobile production containers on the Kenora waterfront.





Long-section through the theatre showing main theatre space.



Long-section through the mobile production containers showing community involvement in theatre production.

## **Perform!**

The void created by unloading the mobile production containers becomes a small-scale theatre space that accommodates up to 150 audience members. By placing the theatre on the boat, and by providing an architecture that is flexible, communities have the ability to arrange the theatre space to suit their needs.

Once the theatre production is complete, the floating theatre travels around Lake of the Woods, sharing a unique theatre creation with the other communities on the waterfront.



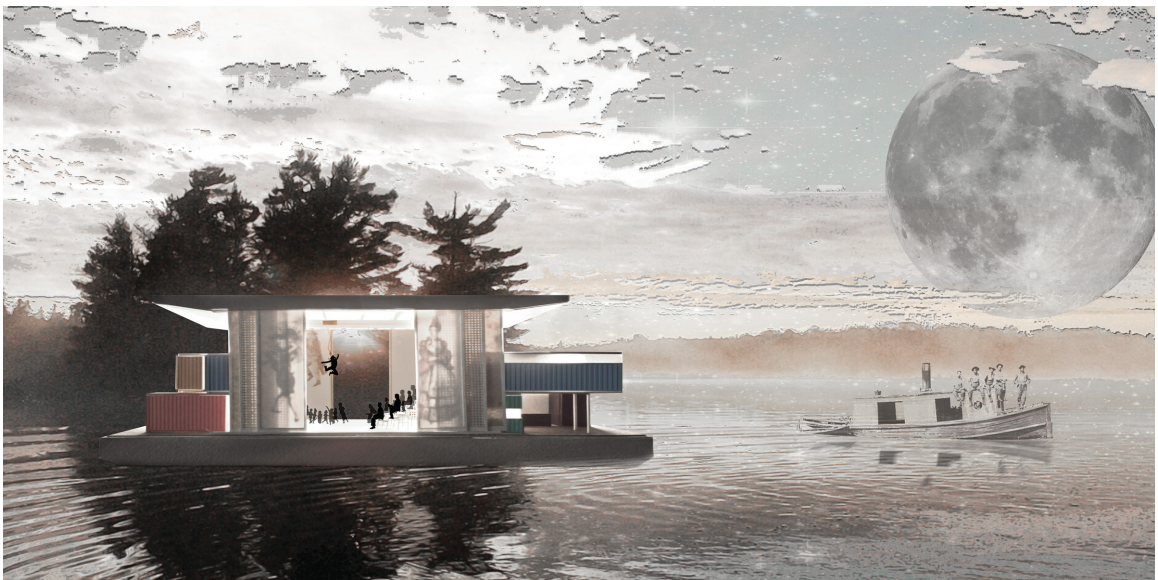
View of the theatre from the waterfront as it is prepared for the performance tour around the lake.



View of the theatre space through the lobby and past the bar.



The theatre interior showing the flexibility of the scaffold seating, audience interaction, and the use of the facade panels to borrow the Lake of the Woods landscape as a backdrop.



The theatre on the water during an evening performance.



Final thesis presentation.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

My initial research provided me a framework for the design of a theatre that succeeds through sensitivity to place, community and culture. To have any hope of affecting change in its audience, a theatrical performance must connect with that audience's ideology. Furthermore, when considering the perception and understanding of a theatrical performance within a community, what cannot be discounted are the activities that extend beyond the theatrical time-frame.

Like any community, the theatre is a world which is not predetermined, but is constantly in the process of becoming. Transitioning fluidly between settings, and back and forth through time, the theatre event is not one that is spatially or temporally fixed. Architecturally, theatre can thrive when generated outside of traditional confines as it provides a new framework for community engagement. By examining the ways in which the methods of production can be linked with the moments of reception, an architecture is developed that promotes community interaction with theatre production as a driver for cultural promotion.

By using a kit-of-parts that can be organized, adapted and reinterpreted based on its context, the single, axial viewpoint for comprehending theatre architecture is abolished. Rather than being rooted in a community, the theatre can adapt, which allows the programme to serve shoreline communities on any body of water.

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