Presentation Title: Theatrical Scenic Design: Creating the Physical World of the Play

Presenters: Sarah J. Fabian, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, Media, and Theatre

Abstract:

Scenic design is an important component of any theatrical production as almost every production will have some form of a set, however minimal. Scenery can be abstract, photo-realistic, or anywhere in between. The primary function of the scenic design is to provide the audience with some context of location(s) for the theatrical work. However, the most important element of any scenic design is to impart a point of view about the story and the world of the play, sharing an emotional and textural experience to the production – Are there moments of surprise, something that suddenly appears that wasn’t previously there? Does the physical world of the play transform to reveal new layers to the story? As a scenic designer, you must be creative, innovative and visionary all while working within the director’s vision. Additionally, scenic designers must understand how to take their artistic vision and make it into a reality through the work executed by the scene shop staff and artisans.

For the 10th Annual Faculty Research & Creative Activities Symposium, I will share my design process from page-to-stage, and present two contrasting examples of my scenic design work from the past year – Kate DiCamillo’s The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane adapted for the stage by Dwayne Hartford at Filament Theatre in Portage Park, and Fulfillment Center by Abe Koogler at A Red Orchid Theatre in Old Town. Afterwards, I will lead the participants in a short design exercise I use in order to “find my way in” to the story.