



THE UGLY ONE

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STUDY GUIDE

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*David Jansen experiments with bandages in the Theatre Smash production of **The Ugly One**.*

SYNOPSIS

Lette is a successful engineer who is also unspeakably ugly. His boss and wife confirm it: his face is “unacceptable.” His plastic surgeon is reluctant to operate – Lette’s face is so ugly it will have to be rebuilt from scratch. The surgeon’s efforts are rewarded, however, when Lette emerges from the operation an Adonis. His life changes overnight: his wife finds him irresistible, he becomes an overnight star at his company and he is fawned upon wherever he goes. But this dream life soon becomes a nightmare, as Lette’s surgeon begins to offer his face to anyone who can pay.

CORE THEMES

- Identity
- Conformity & Homogenization
- Beauty
- Individuality & Commodification

CURRICULUM LINKS

- Drama (*Role & Character; Dramatic Forms; Elements, Principles and Techniques; Creating & Presenting*)
- English (*Oral Communication; Reading & Literature Studies; Media Studies*)
- Health and Physical Education (*Health for Life: Mental Health*)

SOME USEFUL LINKS TO COLOUR YOUR DISCUSSIONS OF THE PLAY.

The Sneetches

A deceptively simple children's story about the perils of racism lends itself to an interesting discussion about individuality, image, and the danger of a universal identity being a means to achieve a tolerant society.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3yJomUhs0g&feature=related>

Twilight Zone – Number 12 Looks Just Like You

In order to achieve social harmony, all young adults of this futuristic society undergo a 'transformation', in which their face and body are changed to make them more physically attractive.

<http://www.letmewatchthis.ch/external.php?title=The+Twilight+Zone+%281959%29&url=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5tZWdhdmkZW8uY29tL3YvTFVVUDdIMFY=&domain=bWVnYXZpZGVvLmNvbQ==&loggedin=0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHuf27fYkRQ&noredirect=1>

TED Talk

Designer Richard Seymour explores how beauty feels.

http://www.ted.com/talks/richard_seymour_how_beauty_feels.html

Dove Ad

An interesting commentary on the media's obsession with image and beauty as a means to sell products, or deconstruction on the art of re-touching?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBF6tURm99I>

Podcast Interview with The Royal Court cast of *The Ugly One*

<http://www.royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/the-ugly-one>

Reviews of the Theatre Smash production:

<http://m.torontosun.com/2011/10/05/ugly-one-will-put-a-smile-on-your-face#.To0CiORRySY.mailto>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/theatre/the-ugly-one-and-some-ugly-truths/article2191965/>

http://www.stage-door.com/Theatre/Current_Reviews/Current_Reviews.html

<http://www.nowtoronto.com/daily/stage/story.cfm?content=183079>

<http://www.classical963fm.com/arts/reviews/item/The-Ugly-One>

<http://www.mooneyontheatre.com/2011/10/08/review-the-ugly-one-theatre-smash/>

THEMATIC ACTIVITIES

AIM: To explore ideas of image, conformity and identity in the world of the play, and in our own world.

Post Performance Reflection

- The Four R's

Reinforce – which ideas, thoughts, conclusions, have been reinforced by this production?

Rethink – what aspects of theatre has this production made you rethink?

Reflect – what thoughts and ideas has this production stimulated?

Reject – what are the aspects that don't work? What do you not agree with?

Notions of Beauty and Ugliness

How would you define the words 'beauty' and 'ugly' to someone unfamiliar with these terms?

- In small groups, make a body sculpture tableau of each word. Consider the six dimensions (up, down, left, right, back, front) when creating your tableau. Discuss the contrasting ideas representing in each sculpture.
- Devise three physical gestures for the word 'beauty'. Devise three physical gestures for the word 'ugly'. Use these gestures to build a whole-class silent performance in response to these terms.

The Opinion Line

After seeing the production, consider your response to the statements below. Find an appropriate place in a line with your classmates, with one end of the line being 'Strongly Agree' and the other, 'Strongly Disagree'. Each person should explain why they have chosen to stand at that particular point in line.

All people are egotistical.

The beauty industry exploits human insecurity for profit.

It's okay to be 'ugly'.

Symbol & Conformity

To what extent do you feel the world of the play is a world which rewards conformity?

To what extent do you feel that our world is a world which rewards conformity?

Consider different symbols for conformity, and how you might represent this idea on stage. Using the idea of a 'production line' (see image below) as a starting point, devise a group piece using ONE symbol which explores the idea of conformity on stage.



DESIGN ACTIVITIES

AIM: To explore design choices as reflective of particular concepts & ideas.

Post Performance Reflection

- Places tell stories. Think about the story suggested by the Tarragon Extra Space in this production. Describe what you remember of the space. Consider:
Seating Colour Symbol Significant objects Set pieces

5 Senses Approach to Design

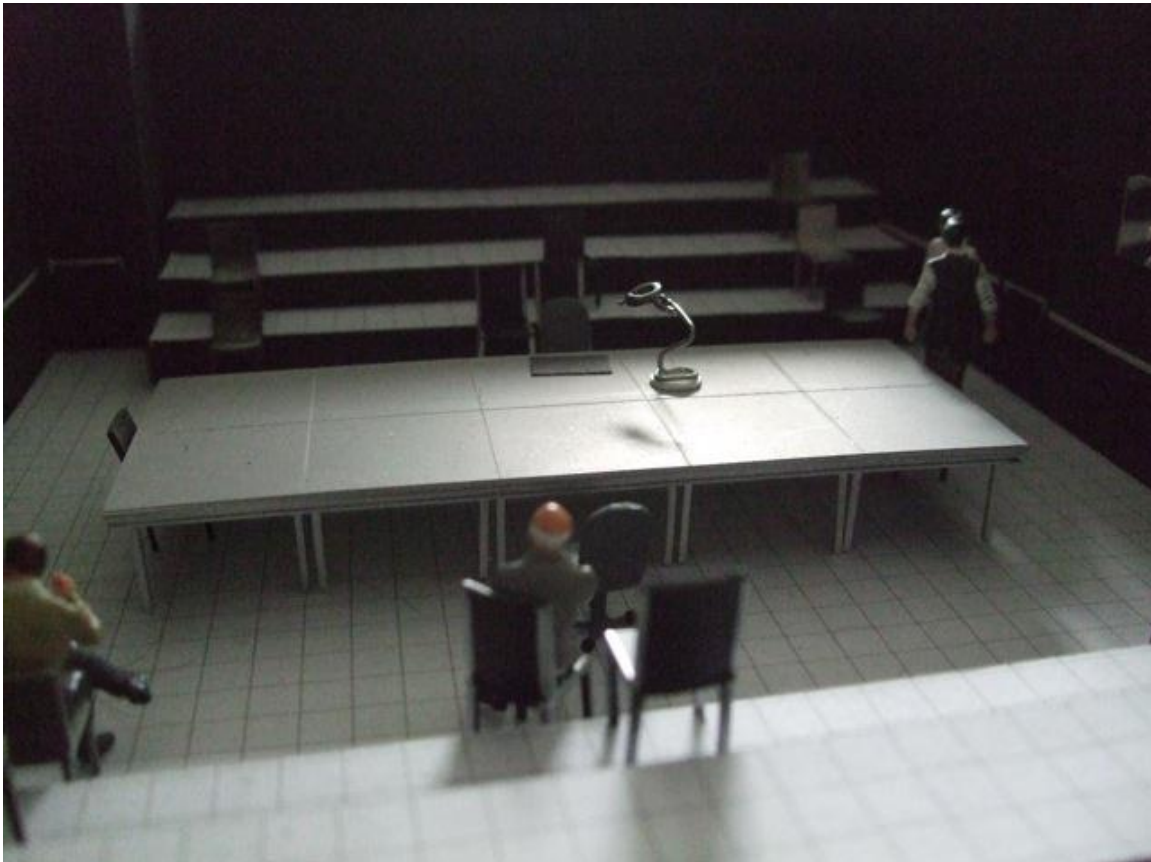
Consider the five senses:

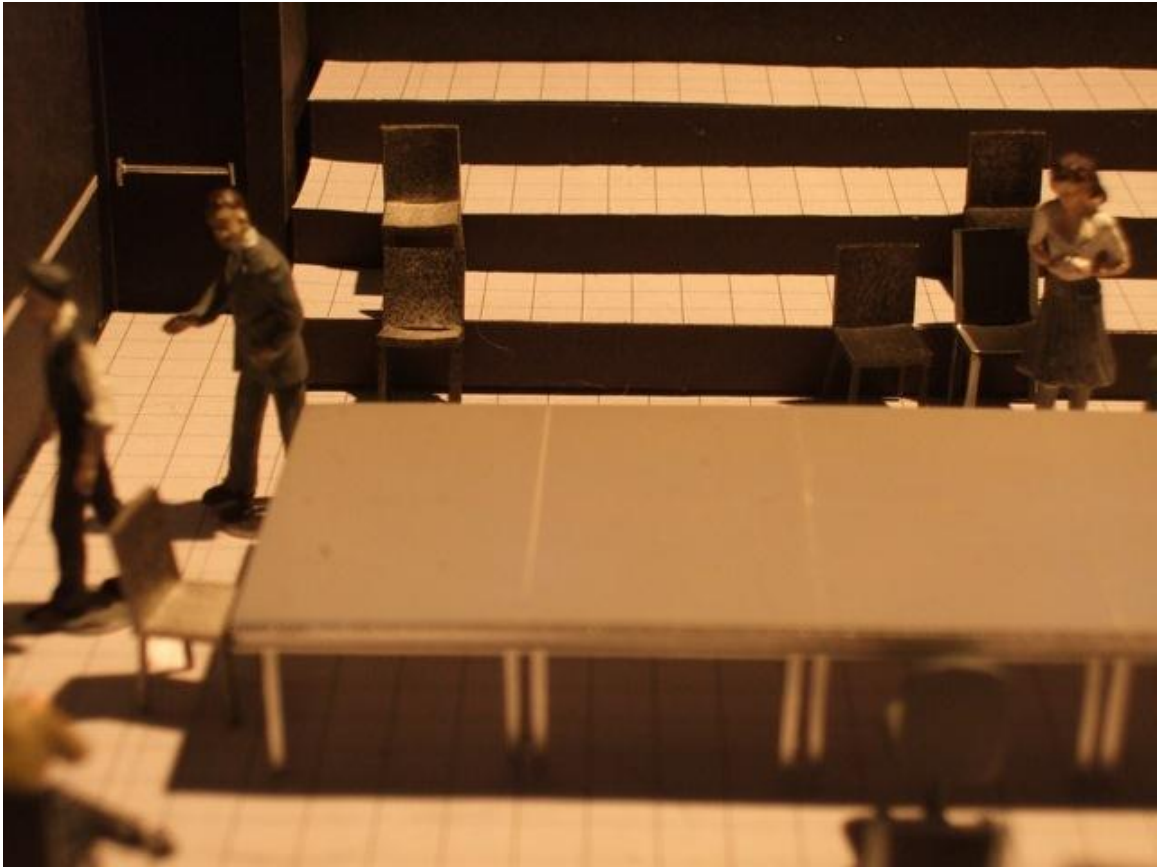
Smell Sight Touch Taste Sound

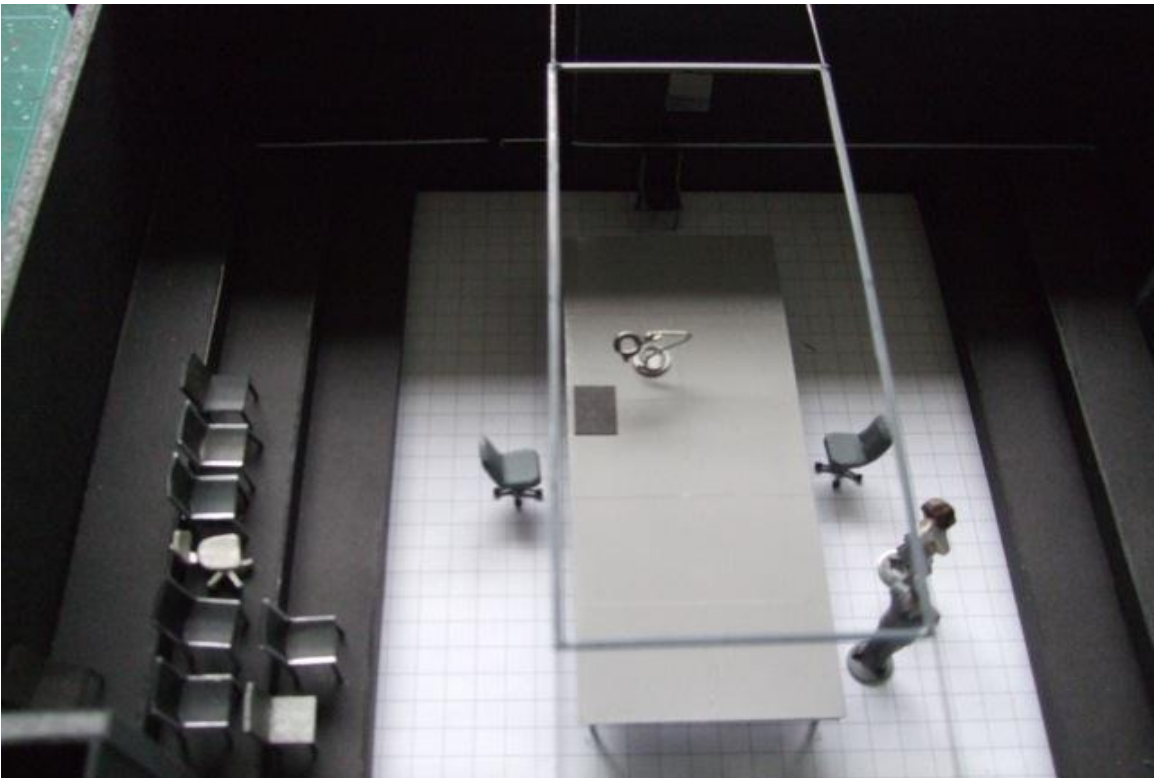
Now consider each sense in terms of your experience of *The Ugly One*. For example, if you could smell the production, how would it smell? If you could touch it, what would it feel like? If it had a taste, what would it taste of? How have the designers created these sensations through their design choices?

Location, Location, Location

Look at the photos of the set maquette below:







Previous productions in Germany have set the play in a hospital operating theatre and a factory. What traits do the three settings (the office, the operating theatre, the factory) share? Why do you think the designers have chosen to deny the audience of visual stimuli in a play so concerned with appearances? Where else might you stage this play? (source: independent.co.uk review of The Royal Court production)

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

AIM: To develop skills in performing and evaluating character performance in *The Ugly One*.

Post Performance Reflection

- List the different characters in the play. How would you boil each character down to his or her 'character juice'? (ie: one trait which defines them?)
- How did the actors embody the different characters?
- Which performance did you enjoy most? Why?

Consider:

Characterisation

Costume

Voice

Gesture

Physical Exaggeration

Props List

What are the 'things' that would help you to become each character? Write an imaginary props list for one character in the play. What three things are in their pocket?

Keeping Up Appearances

In *The Ugly One*, the characters' conflicts and wants are made known to the audience. The characters' desires are always around satisfying greed, power and self-gratification. Do the characters try to keep up the pretense of socially appropriate behavior? In your opinion, is their behavior immoral? Consider each character's dramatic purpose. In what sense are the characters of Fanny, Karlmann and Scheffler three-dimensional, with their own sets of wants and objectives? In what sense are they simply an extension of Lette himself?

Style & Performance

"You cannot act a style; true style results only from doing the specific job at hand in the manner demanded by the form of the play." -Robert Benedetti

- Discuss this quote with reference to the acting styles employed in the production. How does the style of performance complement the dramatic form of the play?
- Consider the excerpt below:

LETTE: I'm disappointed in you. Mr. Scheffler. I need to talk to you, Mr. Scheffler.

SCH EFFLER: I'm peeling some fruit.

LETTE: Why is Karlmann going to the convention?

SCHEFFLER: Why aren't you, I know, I know. Mr. Karlmann, would you leave us alone for a minute, this is a private conversation.

(To Lette) Would you like some fruit as well? I know how you must be feeling, but what did you expect?

LETTE: What did I expect?

SCHEFFLER: Yes, tell me.

LETTE: That I'd go to the convention to present the highvoltage

connector. And not this amateur.

SCHEFFLER: What were you thinking? How would that work?

LETTE: Very simple, a couple of slides, graphics, animations, I've seen that kind of thing, I know how it's done.

SCHEFFLER: But why do you think we're doing this? The stupid convention and all that nonsense.

LETTE: So people can see that we've done a good job, so that they get to know our product.

SCHEFFLER: So that they buy it.

LETTE: Yes, if you like, buy it.

SCHEFFLER: Buy, buy, buy, not if /like.

LETTE: Yes, so?

SCHEFFLER: Buy.

LETTE: Yes, you're right.

SCHEFFLER: You need to sell the high voltage connector.

LETTE: Fine, I'll sell it.

SCHEFFLER: You're not serious.

LETTE: Why not?

SCHEFFLER: You must be aware that -

LETTE: What?

SCHEFFLER: You must know that -

LETTE: What?

SCHEFFLER: That it's out of the question.

LETTE: Aha. Why?

SCHEFFLER: You don't know -?

LETTE: No, what?

SCHEFFLER: No one's ever told you?

LETTE: I've no idea.

SCHEFFLER: I can't believe that this is one of those things I get stuck with.

LETTE: What?

SCHEFFLER: That I'm the one that has to tell you.

LETTE: What?

SCHEFFLER: I used to think: when I'm in charge I'll have someone in the front office, a secretary or something and she'll do things like this, she'll take my calls, intercept my mail and deal with it, I thought: I'm in charge and everyone else can do those things for me so I can focus on the important things. And now I'm sitting here with you.

LETTE: I'm afraid I don't understand.

SCHEFFLER: But maybe this *is* an important thing.

LETTE: What?

SCHEFFLER: That I of all people have to be the one to tell you that your face is unacceptable. Today I'm taking responsibility and doing something that really has an impact. Maybe only the man in charge *can* do it.

LETTE: My face?

SCHEFFLER: No one's ever told you?

LETTE: No.

SCHEFFLER: But you have a wife.

LETTE: Just a minute, I don't understand -

SCHEFFLER: We can't stand the sight of you... if you can take a joke. You can't? Okay, I can understand that. You can't sell anything with that face.

LETTE: With what face?

SCHEFFLER: Would you like some fruit now? No?

LETTE: What about my face?

SCHEFFLER: Is your mother still alive?
LETTE: What about my mother?
SCHEFFLER: Maybe she can tell you where it came from.
LETTE: My mother can't tell me anything.
SCHEFFLER: Or your wife, after all she picked you. Talk to her, I'm finishing early today. This conversation has worn me out. Please don't pull a face.
LETTE: What kind of face?

With a partner, prepare a realistic performance of this scene. Consider performance choices you can make in order to reinforce the *believability* of your character. How can you make them *true to life*? Then, prepare a performance in which your expression of character is heightened, in which, rather than attempting to represent real life, you work on the level of caricature and the grotesque. You might like to consider the following styles: silent movies, opera, television soap opera, melodrama.

Debrief:

- *What is the effect of each performance style on you as an actor? As an audience member?*
- *In your opinion, which is the most effective performance style?*
- *Are you able to achieve believability without compromising a heightened and extreme performance style?*
- *How important is it for the actor to understand their character's dramatic purpose?*

We hope you enjoyed the production, and have found this guide useful. We'd love to hear what you think! info@theatresmash.com



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