

Dom Pérignon

IC)NOCL)ST

[LINK TO VIEW PROJECT HERE](#)

When Iconoclast initially contacted me about this project for Dom Perignon, the project was explained to me to be shot in two pieces. One on location in France at the famous birthplace of Dom Perignon, the 650-year-old Benedictine Abbey and vineyard at Hautvillers in Champagne, France. The other piece was to be shot on stage here in Los Angeles.

All of the dance, the wirework, and coverage of the abbey and chapel would occur in France. The pieces with Lady Gaga would occur in LA as she was unable to travel. The team in LA would be responsible for reproducing some of the cloister that was in France. The legendary European production designer Jan Houllievigie would handle the French component, and I would collaborate on the design of the LA portion.

My initial reaction was to pass on the job. I explained that an art director may be better suited to execute Jan's vision, as he no doubt could oversee the work from afar. I referred several capable and experienced options. However, Iconoclast persisted. They explained they wanted me to co-design the project. My longtime agent and advisor, Trevor, urged me to reconsider. I decided to listen to the advice of Art Director Mundo Enriquez to keep an open mind. Perhaps I could learn something new and make some new friends, not to mention I was getting the better part of the job - recreating a piece of historical architecture and creating a look from scratch on stage for one of the world's most prestigious brands and artists.



CLOISTER CONSTRUCTION

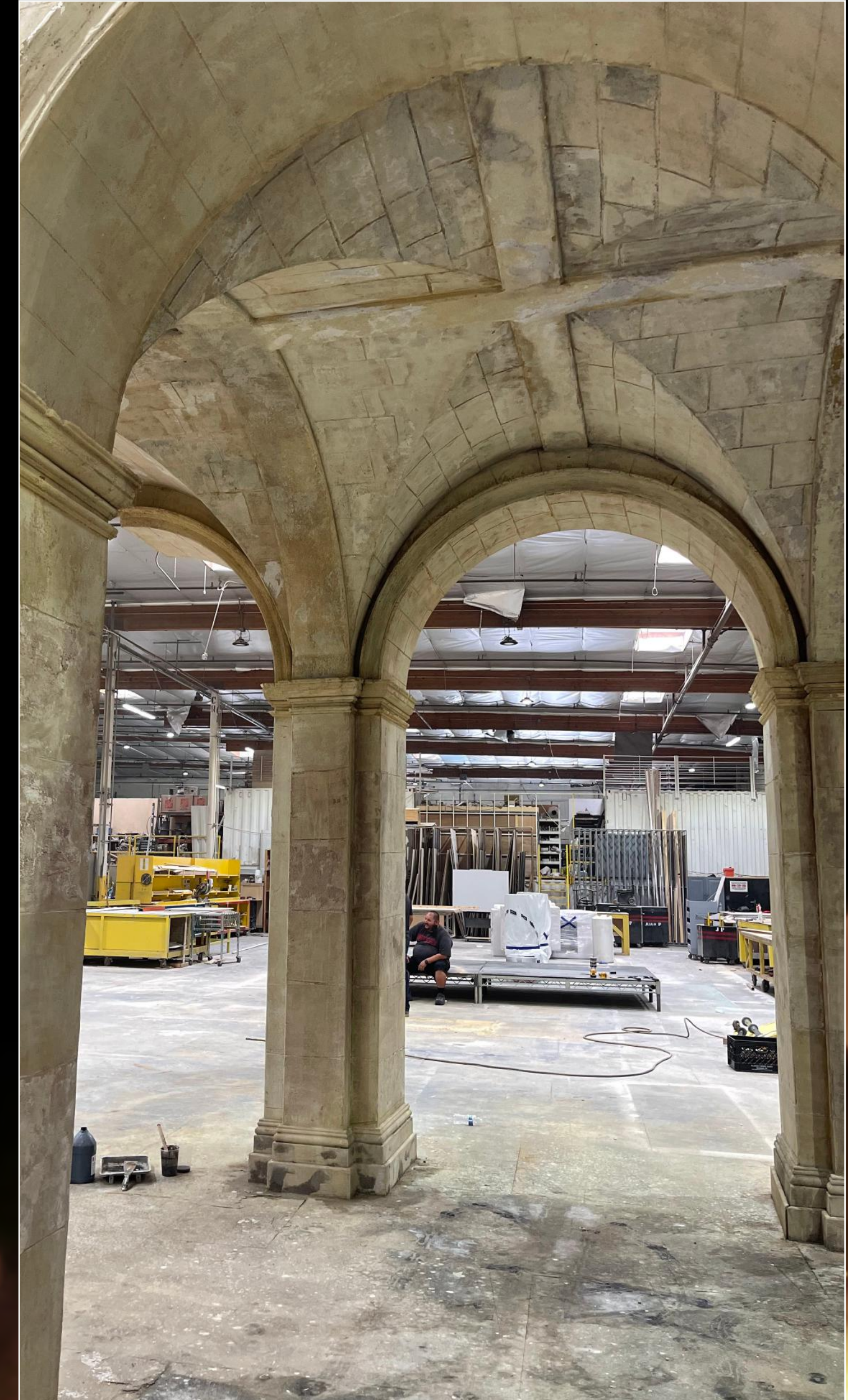
All of the dance, the wirework, and coverage of the abbey and chapel would happen in France. Anything involving Lady Gaga would occur in LA, as she was unable to travel. The team in LA would be responsible for reproducing some of the cloister that was in France. The concept was that it would feel as though that partial section was built identically but for theater.

The abbey, originally built in 650, and its beautiful cloister, built in 1692, all in white stone, were featured in the footage shot there, so our reproduction would need to be an exact match. Jan and the French team took careful measurements and documented the condition, texture, and color of the stone in varied lighting. Since we planned to shoot in black and white, these textures needed to be exact. We exchanged several photos, scans, and digital models to ensure we were capturing the shapes, scale, and textures accurately. Jan and I shared samples back and forth via email, text, and Zoom calls to try and make sure we were getting it right.

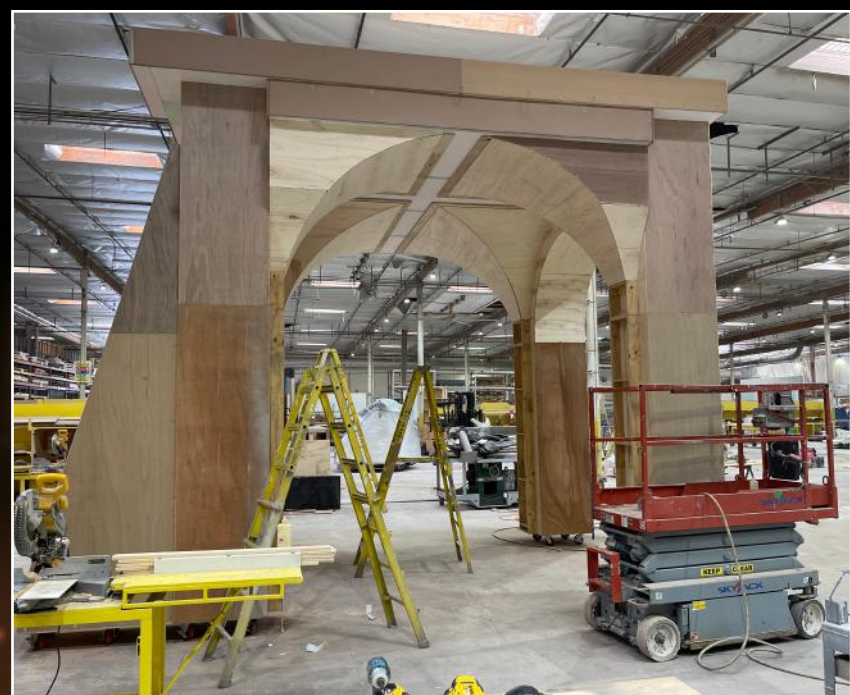
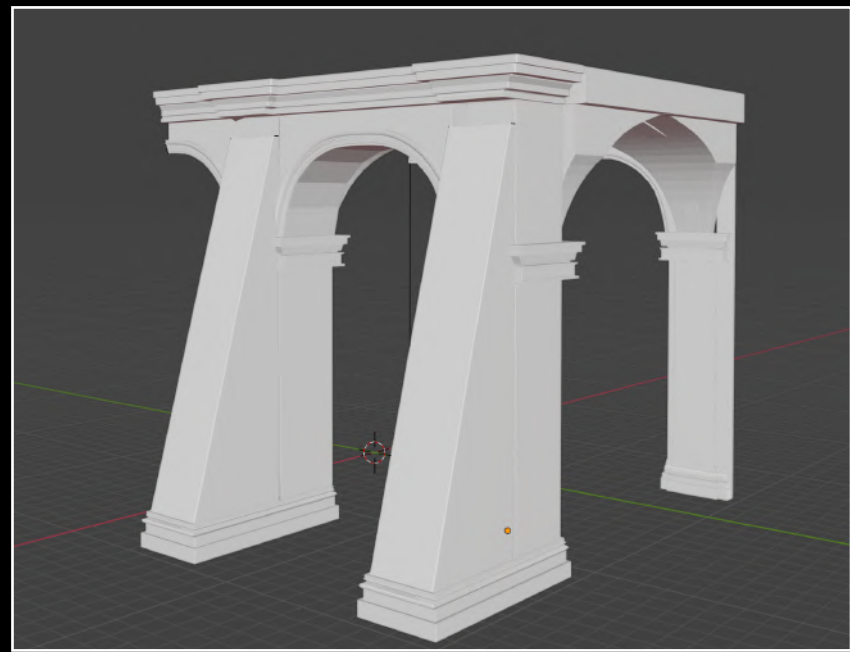
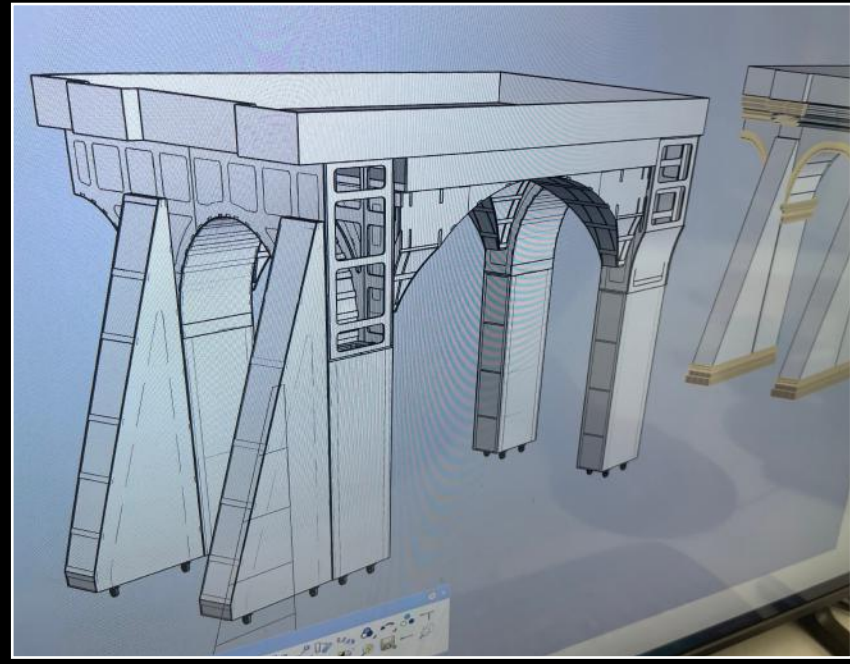
The finishes were achieved through a variety of techniques, some work in foam, several layers of plaster, then painted and aged, only to be repeated over 10 days to create the layered and dimensional finish that was an exact match. It's projects like these that keep us inspired. It's what is so magical about working alongside talented artisans and craftspeople in our business.



LOCATION IMAGES



INITIAL CLOISTER CONSTRUCTION



The other challenge was that we wanted to have the option to reposition the arch to the camera, or possibly have some dancers move it as part of the choreography. A metal frame proved difficult, given the need to assemble and disassemble it for transport to the stage.

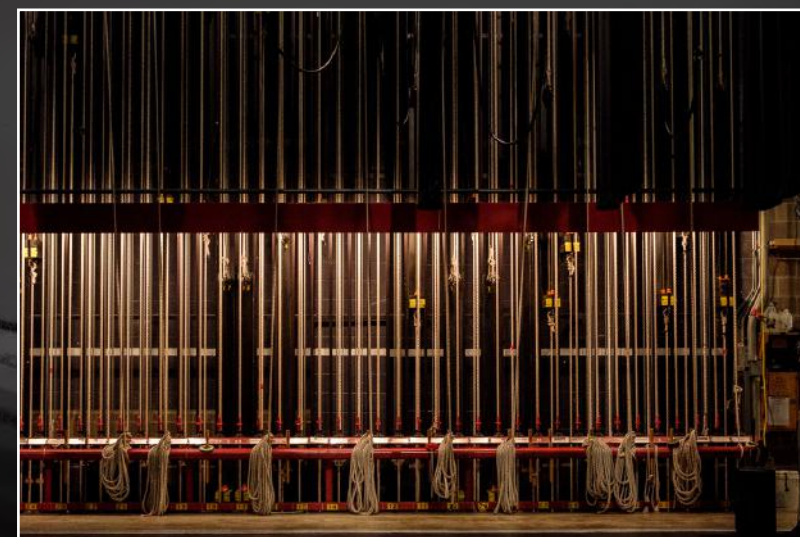
Gaston Martinez engineered a brilliant series of plywood interior baffles that allowed us to build and unbolt it from the interior while saving weight. We were able to conceal oversized casters within the legs and behind the base molding.

BACK STAGE, ON STAGE

Our director wanted to create a backstage area where the viewer finds Gaga alone, writing music, and choreographing some moves. The set would be backstage at a grand theater or opera house, just behind the curtain. This was created in a black void of solids on our combined stages. In front of the black curtains, we added all the details found in our research to make it feel alive, well-worn, and real.

In my research, one consistent and iconic element that all theaters have is a fly or theatrical rigging system. The director agreed. Sometimes, all you need is one great element to advance the story and bring something to life.

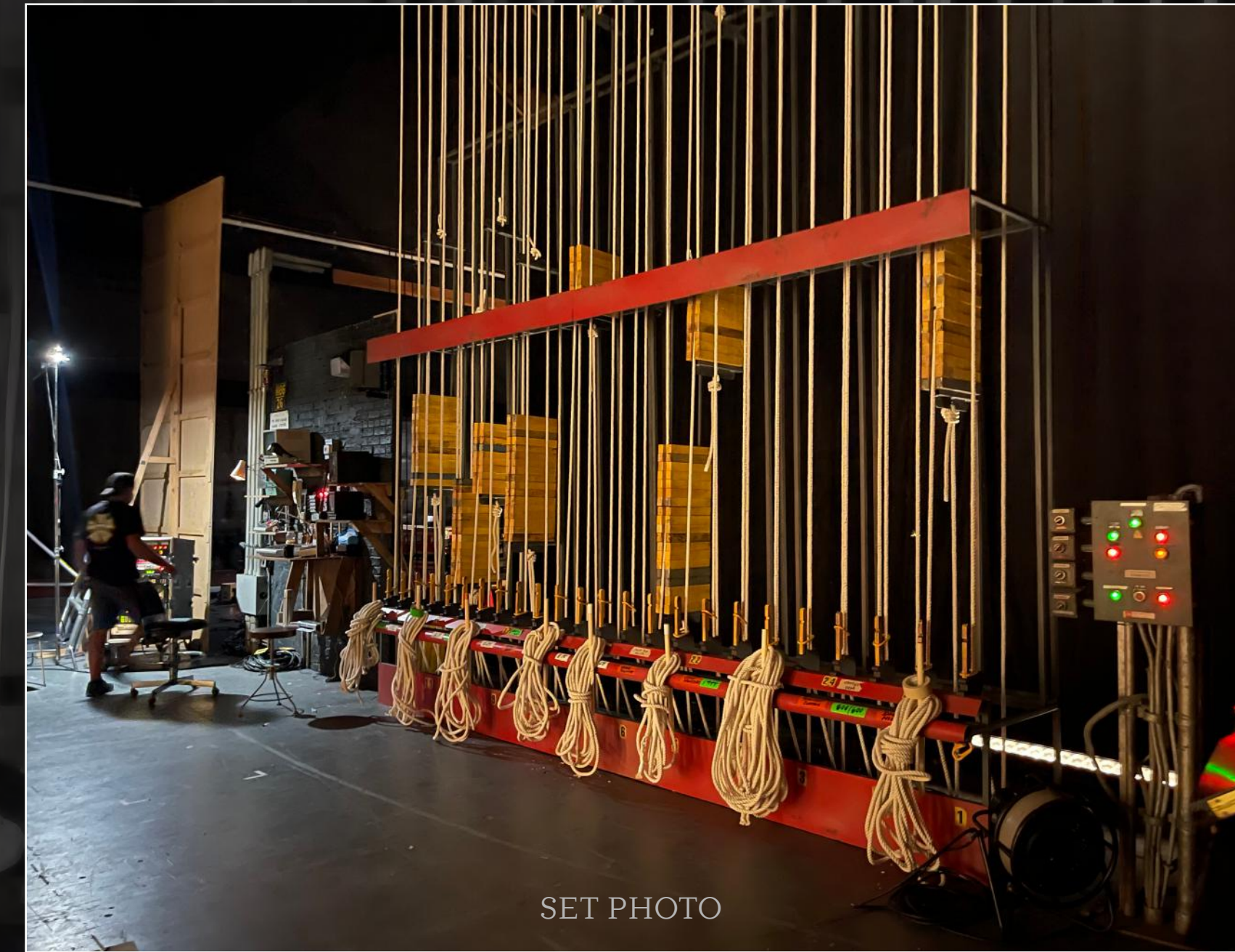
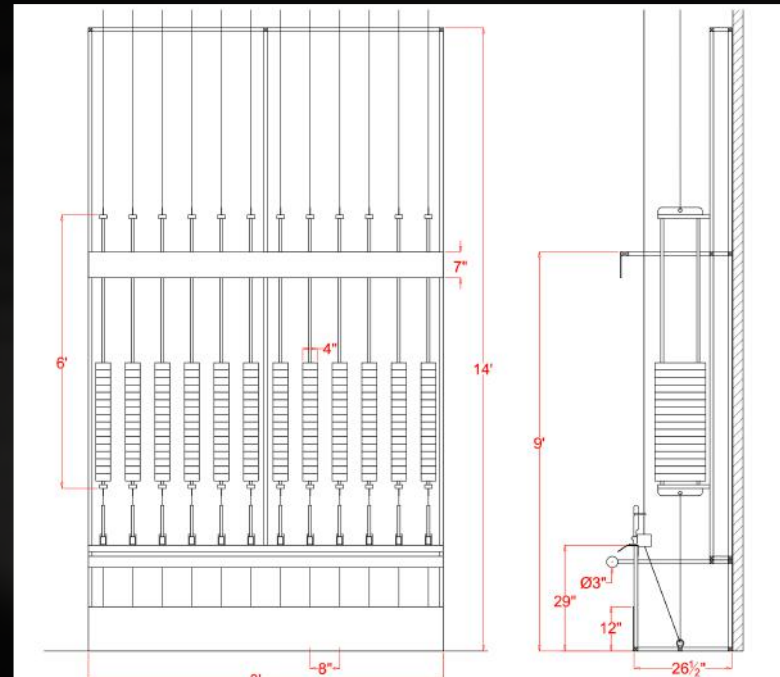
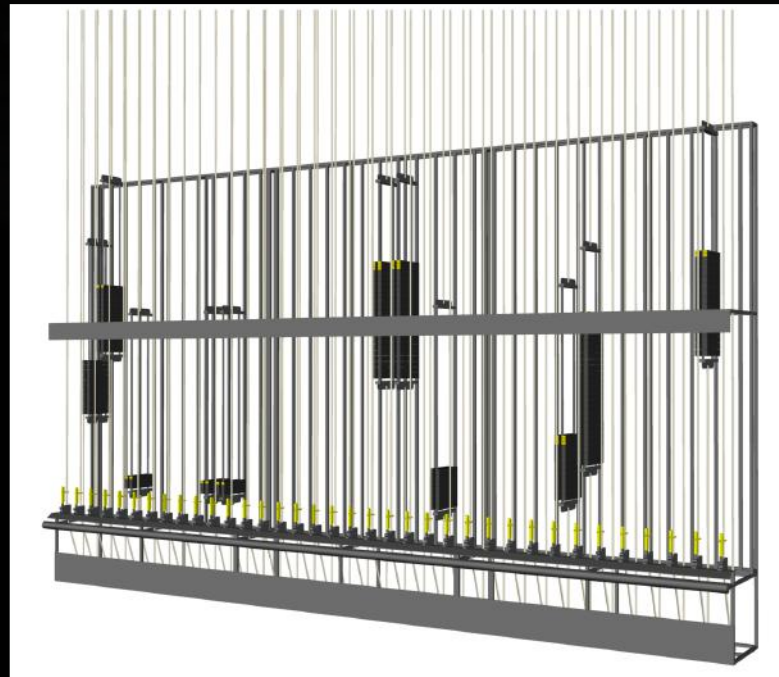
Along with some black-painted brick flats, we created a stage manager area to give us some added texture and some soft light. Beyond that, we created a faux fly rail. The fly rail was the perfect punctuation to the darkness and depth. It added verticality, authenticity, and texture to our set.



FLY RAIL RIG

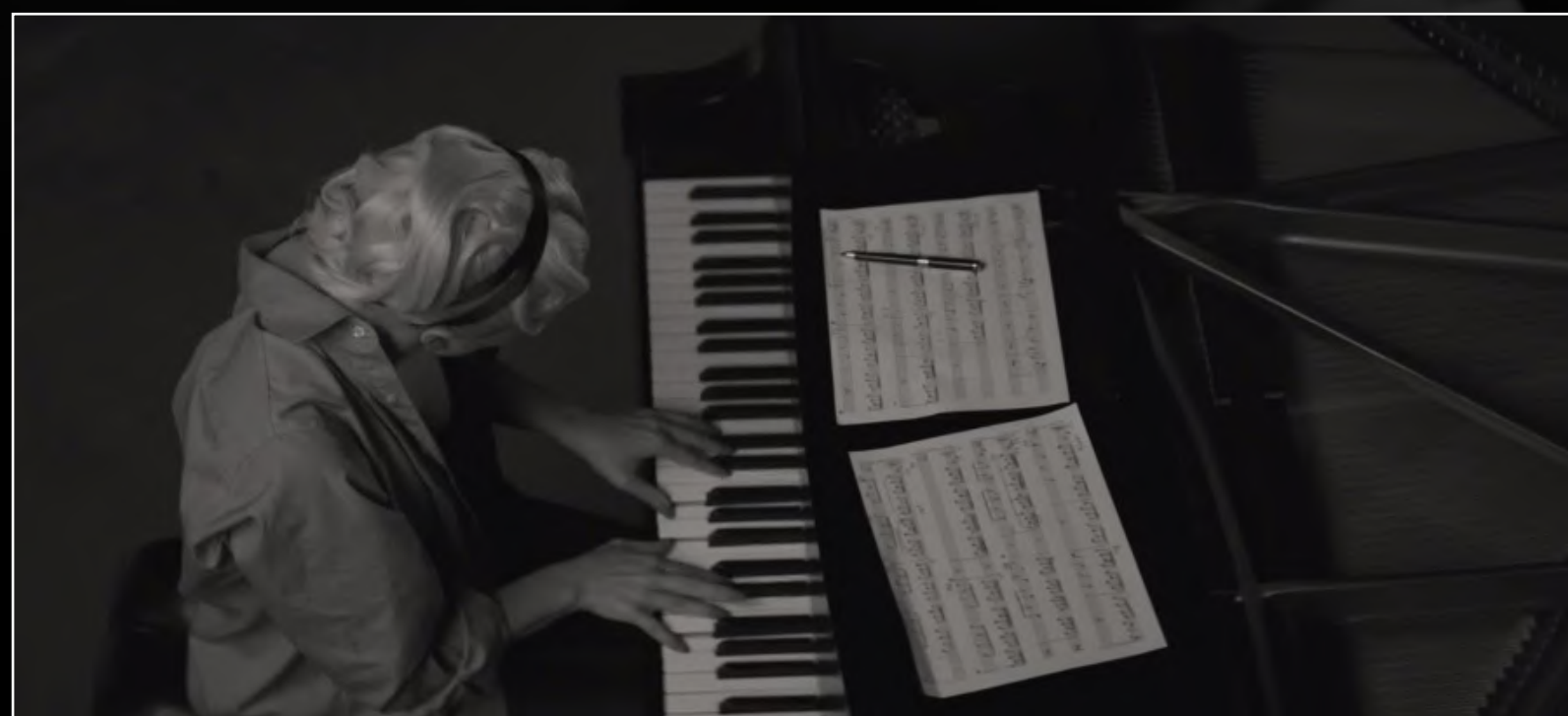
The fly rail was built as a 32' x 14' section in steel, top and bottom, that was then hung from the grid. The counterweights were all carved foam that were painted and aged. The brake levers were built as sandwiched MDF and also aged to give them realistic wear at each section. The correct gauge rope and hardware were recreated.

To ensure authenticity, I invited a theater hand to visit our set to review and approve our rigging and ensure the look had been done as it would be in a theater.



SET PHOTO

SOUNDING GOOD

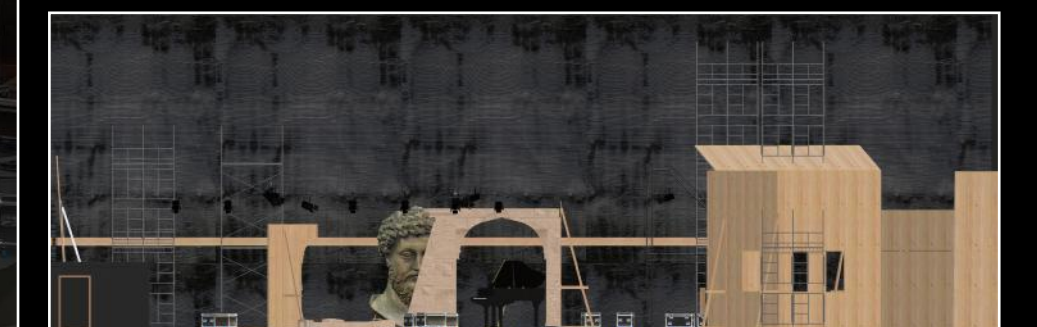


The team in LA sourced a matte black concert grand Steinway that Gaga had previously played. We then created custom matte paneling to cover any logos and subdued all the visible hardware to keep the focus squarely on our actress.

Several vintage French metronomes from the 1800s and 1900s were sourced, refinished, and silenced for our shoot.



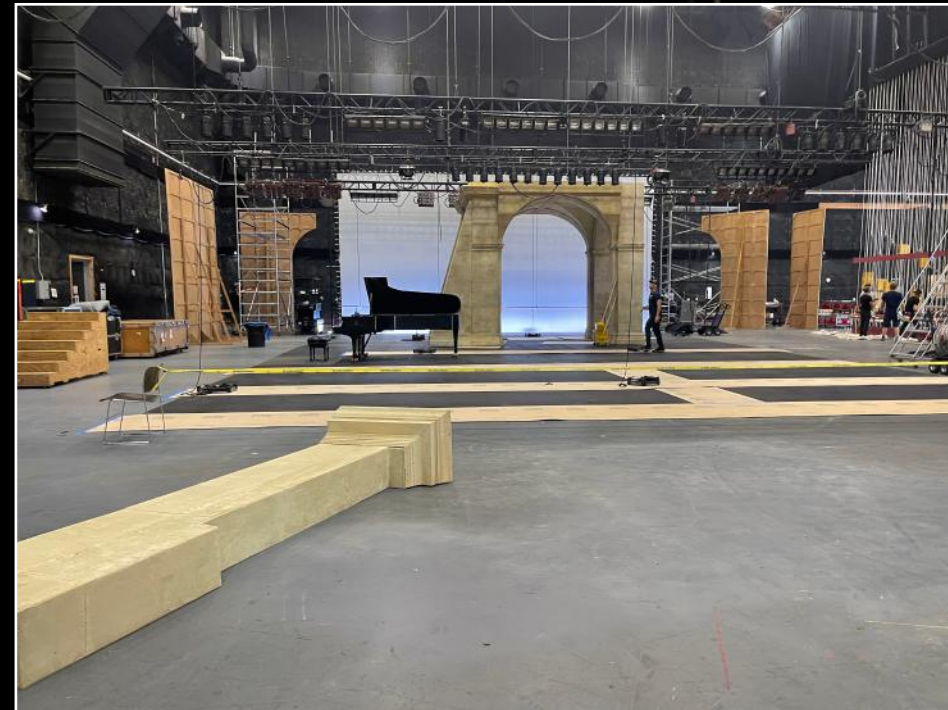
STAGE LAYOUTS AND BACKLIGHT



The overall set layouts were a collaboration between Jan, the director, and me. The French team shared some beautiful renders, and we reciprocated by sharing our models. We planned together. Everything, from the truss structures holding the on-camera lights to the backlit rear projection screen (sourced and shipped from the shoot in Europe), to the position of the set dressing, was carefully planned to exist quietly without distracting the camera's attention.

ILLUSTRATIONS

STAGE LAYOUTS AND BACKLIGHT



After looking for oversized theater elements, 14 large nondescript theater set pieces were built to occupy the edges of the frame. We built and aged multiple 18-20ft shapes to be seen only from the rear, as though they were sets for the next act. We combined stages 24-25 at Universal Studios to allow us enough room to track into our set. A 90x60 floor was painted and aged to feel like the stage floor at the opera.



We had a 2-day pre-light and a lovely 2-day shoot with Gaga. We came together and created something beautiful, something simple. But, more importantly, we created new friendships that literally spanned the globe in the process.

So let's raise a glass and toast to all of us in the art department.

We deserve it. Cheers!

Thanks for looking.



Dom Pérignon

2023 ADG AWARDS CONSIDERATION

SHOT ON LOCATION IN FRANCE



DYLAN KAHN
PRODUCTION DESIGN

Dom Pérignon
🛡️

2023 ADG AWARDS CONSIDERATION

SHOT ON LOCATION IN LOS ANGELES



[LINK TO VIEW PROJECT HERE](#)

Dom Pérignon



IC)NOCLAST

Yoann Lemoine : Director

Chayse Irvin ASC CSC : Director of Photography

Dylan Kahn : Production Designer US 

Jan Houlevigue : Production Designer FR 

Raymundo Enriquez : Art Director

Nicki Nevlin : Asst. Art Director

Alistair Milne : Illustrator

Gail Otter : Set Decorator

THANK YOU!

