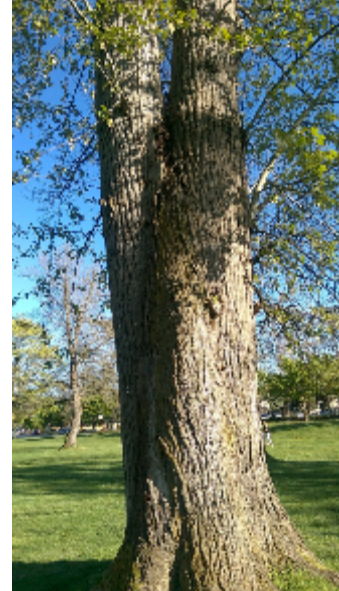
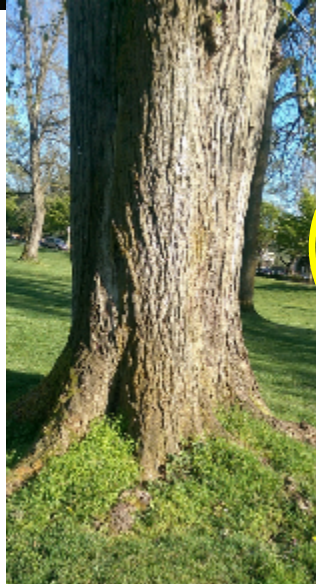
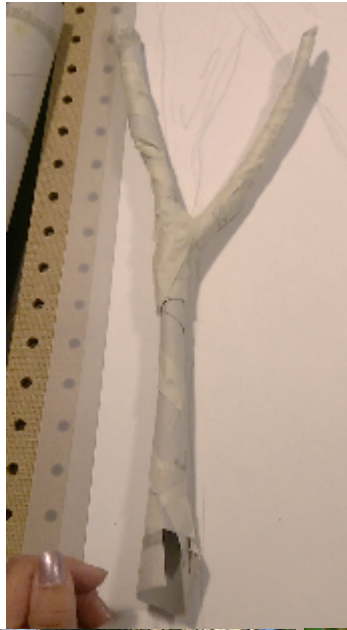


Trees

I cut in half the rolls of paper towels, then I rolled them into thinner tubes and shaped them into a general tree form and secured them with masking tape. The size of the trees is in relation of the size of the puppets. I took as a reference photos of big trees like the ones below, and tried to copy them as much as I could.

For the small but thick branches and the bottom of the trees, I used rolls of toilet paper. For the small branches I used pieces of wire covered with masking tape.

To weigh them down I added coins inside the bottom of the trees.



Luz Gaitan

Once the trees had the shape that I wanted, I covered them in cheesecloth and a mix of water and white glue (left top). This helped the tree to have a more realistic shape and facilitates the next step. I next covered the tree with Celluclay (Paper Mache) (left bottom). With the yellow tool shown in the photo below, I textured the Celluclay to give the tree the texture of an old and tall tree.

Once everything was dry I painted the trees with red and mustard ink, and used a brush and water to extend the trees and give it different tonalities around the trees.

After the painting was dry I used copper-colored acrylic paint and black gesso and applied them with a dried brush to give more texture.



Finally I added a little of fake moss at the bottom.



Making the Set

Set

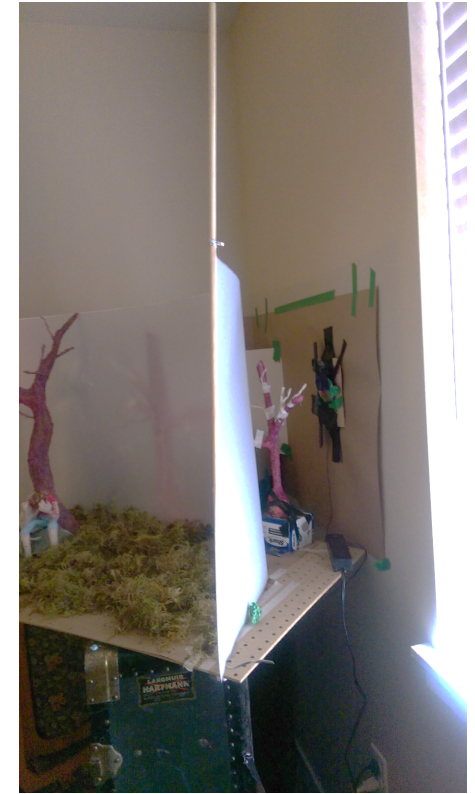


This is the set. In the back I used three LED sources, one in the center and one other on each side. They overlapped a little bit and created a sharp silhouette against the paper. I used melamine hole board and I put it on top of the trunk as a stand or base. This helped to create a “tall table” with an area that I could secure the puppets with bolts very easily. This would really facilitate the shooting; a normal table could also be used, but there would be a constant need to drill into the table.

There was a window next to my set which I covered with craft paper to black out so there wasn't exterior light that could modify the lighting of the set.

I secured everything in the set with double sided tape or duct tape.





For my cyclorama I used two sheets of Polyester Drafting Film Frosted (24x36). I cut one in two and then I put the two halves on each side of the whole sheet. This helped to prevent having visible divisions right in the middle of the cyclorama. Then I used double-sided tape to secure a 1/8" flat aluminum wire on each of the top and bottom of the cyclorama. This helped to keep the paper standing up, stable and evenly curved. I also used 2 circular 1/4" dowel sticks attached to the each end of the paper, then I stuck them in the holes in the board and secured with clay to immobilize them.

Lights



I tried two different kinds of light for creating the silhouettes of the trees. I haven't worked with this paper before. One side of it is frosted and the other is shiny. Therefore, I didn't know how different lights would react with it. On the left there is a single incandescent light; on the right there are three LED sources. In the end, I chose the LED option.



I tried different gel combinations to color the backlight that created the trees' silhouettes. I wanted a mix of yellow (ochre) in the bottom that progressively changed to a purple/blue like in my set design (bottom-right). Because I had a lot of gel scraps, I didn't have knowledge of the brand or the name of the gels that I used. At the end I used a mix of gels: light yellow, light orange, light and dark purple.



In the front of the cyclorama there was one incandescent side light on the left with first a green and then a purple gel; on the right side, I used two incandescent lights on a dimmer: one with a blue gel and the other with a dark yellow gel. I clamped these two lights on a standing lamp that I used as a boom.

To have front light all the time, I attached to the front of the camera this flexible LED screen (bottom-center) which had 3 different levels of brightness that was extremely helpful. I made sure to tape all the cables to the floor for safety and stability.



Problems

There weren't many problems during shooting, but here are listed the few problems that I had:

- because the place where I was shooting was small, the lights warmed the room significantly. The clay of the puppets started to be very flexible and that made them very hard to work with.
- The epoxy putty layer that I covered the legs with was a very thin layer in some parts, and it broke during shooting. I had to stop the movie 3 times to repair the puppets and the epoxy putty takes an hour to dry each time.
- One puppet fell and her face was smashed; I had to redo part of her face.
- The moss was sticking a lot to their body, especially after the clay started to melt.
- The red of the shirt of the flying woman was a color that very easily stained lighter colors.

