



# Storytelling & Designing Immersive Experiences

Lecture 7  
IML 499



# Storytelling

- Why is storytelling important in UX?
- How does the concept of narrative work in digital product design?



# Why Good Storytelling Helps You Design Great Products

Braden Kowitz



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Artist, Maker, Designer

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# Alvarado Caverns and Mystery Theater

Machine Project















## Introduction

This project is a combination funfair-style Haunted House and performance space that will take place at the Machine Project facility for a period of 6 weeks from October to mid November. The project consists of an extensive renovation of the space, transforming the iconic storefront to accommodate a variety of displays, performances and attractions.

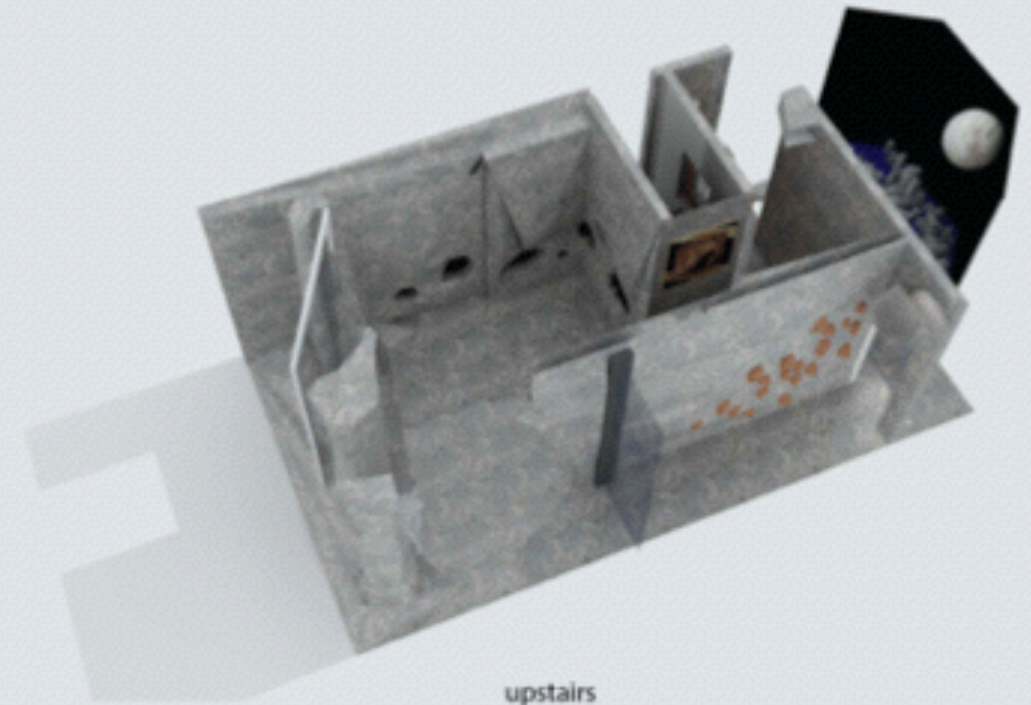
The total experience of the redesigned space, installed interactive exhibits, and numerous performances will correspond to a traditional traveling sideshow, Haunted House or dark ride, however the types of content displayed in these settings is open for exploration by collaborating artists and performers.



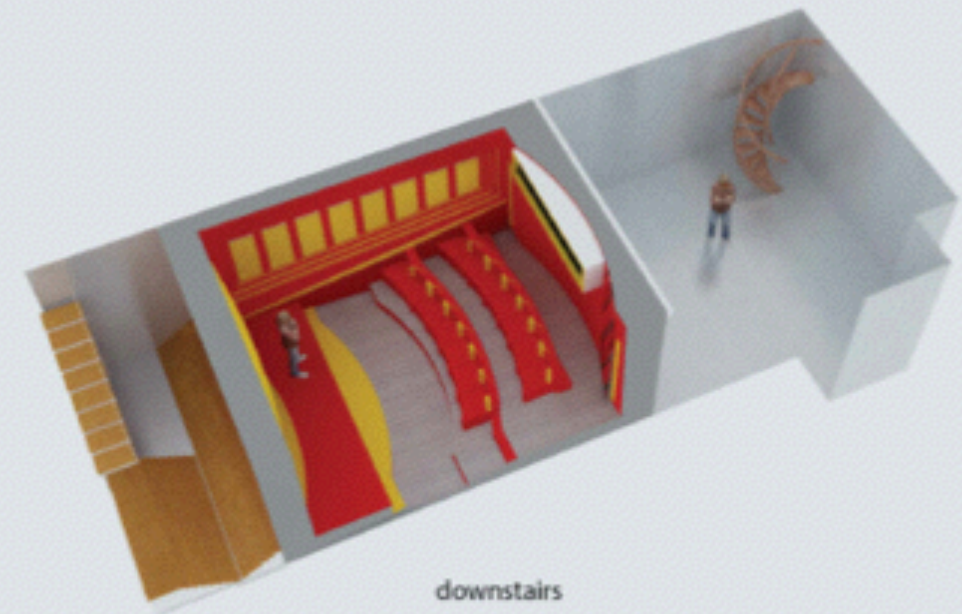
before



after



upstairs



downstairs

## Floorplan

The transformation of Machine Project's storefront will take place on two levels, an upstairs maze-like space and a downstairs theater and lobby. For the run of the show, there will be two general modes of operation: a default setup that allows minimal gallery attendants to monitor and facilitate the space, and a performance setup that accommodates performances and live events that are scheduled and facilitated by onsite staff.



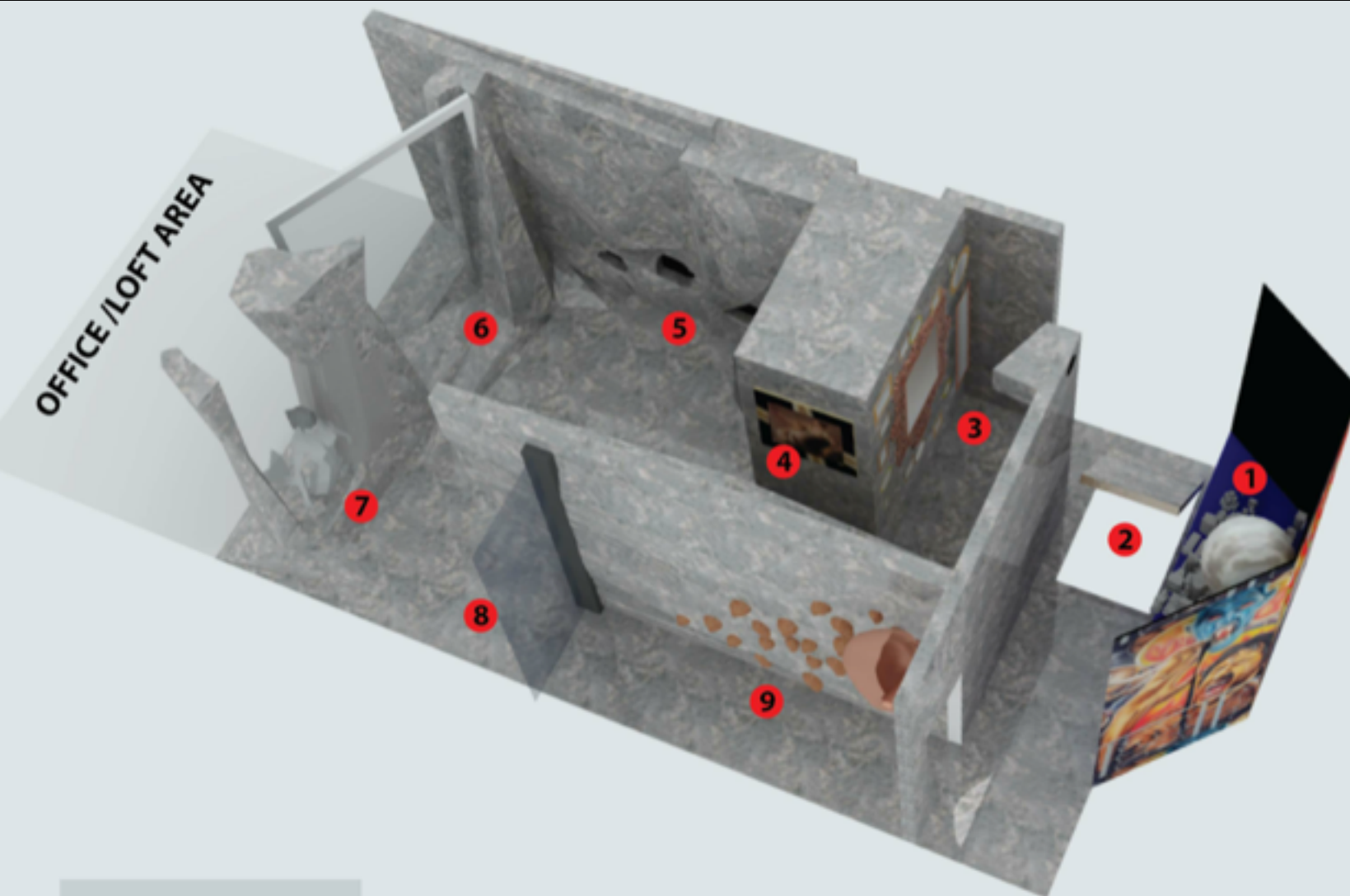


## Downstairs

Newly constructed for the installation is a trapdoor and a staircase/ramp that allows visitors to access the basement of Machine Project. The trapdoor allows the space to be sealed or linked to the upstairs environment depending on the events scheduled that day. The downstairs area will be a small 15 seat theater and multipurpose lobby area. The lobby is capable of adapting for live performances in the round or for the display of objects of interest. Many of the projects upstairs, such as miniature holograms and automata can be brought down into this space to create a "cabinet of curiosities." Theatrical flats used upstairs can even be duplicated or moved down to create an additional "maze" space leading people to the seating area of the theater.

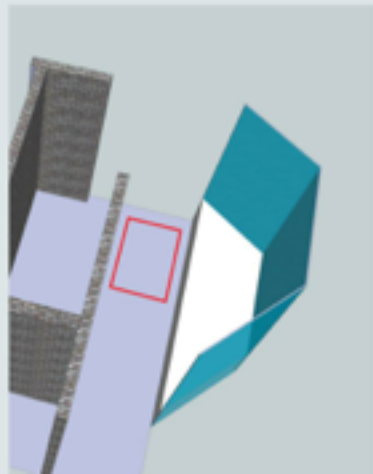






The main floor will be renovated into a modifiable maze, with voids in the walls and sets for dioramas, similar to a typical haunted house or dark ride. This will enable a walk-through ghost house experience in "default mode" with areas for artists and performers to take advantage of for their own projects in "performance mode". Possible suggested attractions are a pepper's ghost diorama, an animated mermaid, various hallways of trapped souls, a miniature cityscape diorama and a water vapor projection. Another exciting possibility in "event mode" would be the use of office roller-chairs to create a manual "dark ride" that allows visitors to experience the haunted house as if it were an automated roller coaster attraction.

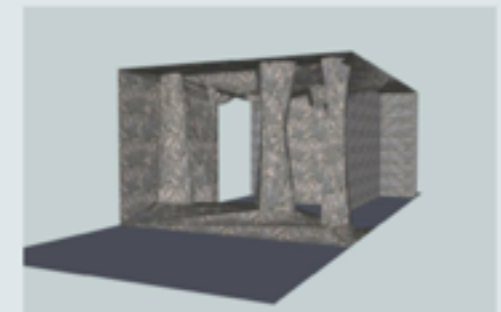
- 1 Miniature Echo Park diorama**
- 2 Trap door to lower level**
- 3 Wall of Mirrors**
- 4 Changing Portrait**
- 5 Trapped Souls**
- 6 Pepper's Ghost Diorama**
- 7 Animatronic Mermaid**
- 8 Vapor Display**
- 9 Wall of Heads**



Examples of similarly lit and set dressed dark ride attractions. Theatrical lighting and UV blacklights will be

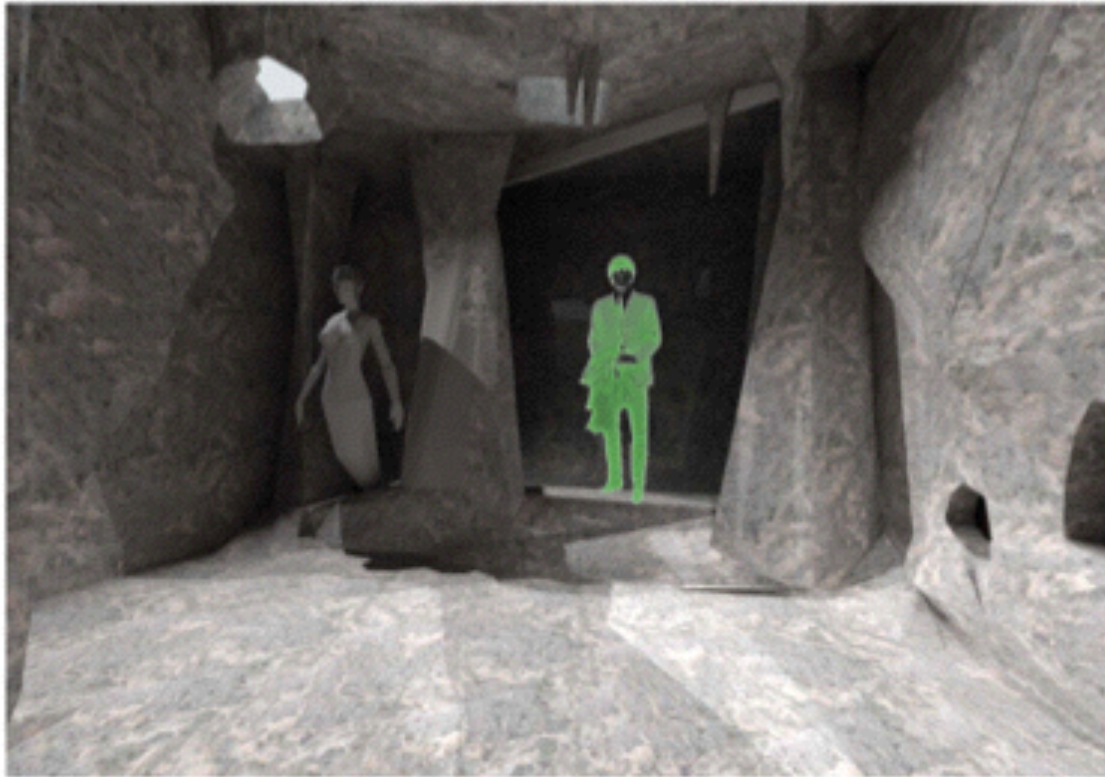


The cave-like environment is designed using CAD software allowing quick development of dimensional setpieces from lightweight 3D materials, leaving construction easy to



The proposed installation preserves the existing office space and loft to allow day-to-day operations to continue. This office space can also be used as a control room or backstage area.





Ghostly Performer (right) and Animatronic, Vomiting mermaid (left)

### Pepper's Ghost Diorama

The maze opens up into a larger area for the main diorama, which will serve as a performance space. This diorama, which is dressed with both foreground and tromp l'oeil background elements to match the cave-like environment, will incorporate a Pepper's ghost illusion that will transform the performer into a translucent ghost. One possibility is to have the performance in this diorama linked to the miniature alcove holograms embedded in the walls.

### Animatronic Mermaid

To the left of the main diorama, the visitor then encounters a smaller adjacent diorama with a large animatronic element. Shown here is a Mermaid that vomits bubbles.

### Vapor Projection

The visitor, horrified by the vomiting animatronic is then propelled into a much narrower hallway, possibly through a coffin-like entrance. A ghostly image, projected onto a curtain of mist that the visitor can walk through beckons them farther down the hallway.

### Hallway of Faces

As the visitor walks farther down this hallway faces suddenly appear embedded in the rocks next to them, chanting strange phrases and incantations, or cussing at them. The cacophony of chanting/swearing faces leads the visitor to an enormous head at the very end of the hall that commands the visitor to leave. The visitor is then compelled to exit directly beneath the enormous head, and is delivered safely back onto Alvarado street, where other horrors await.

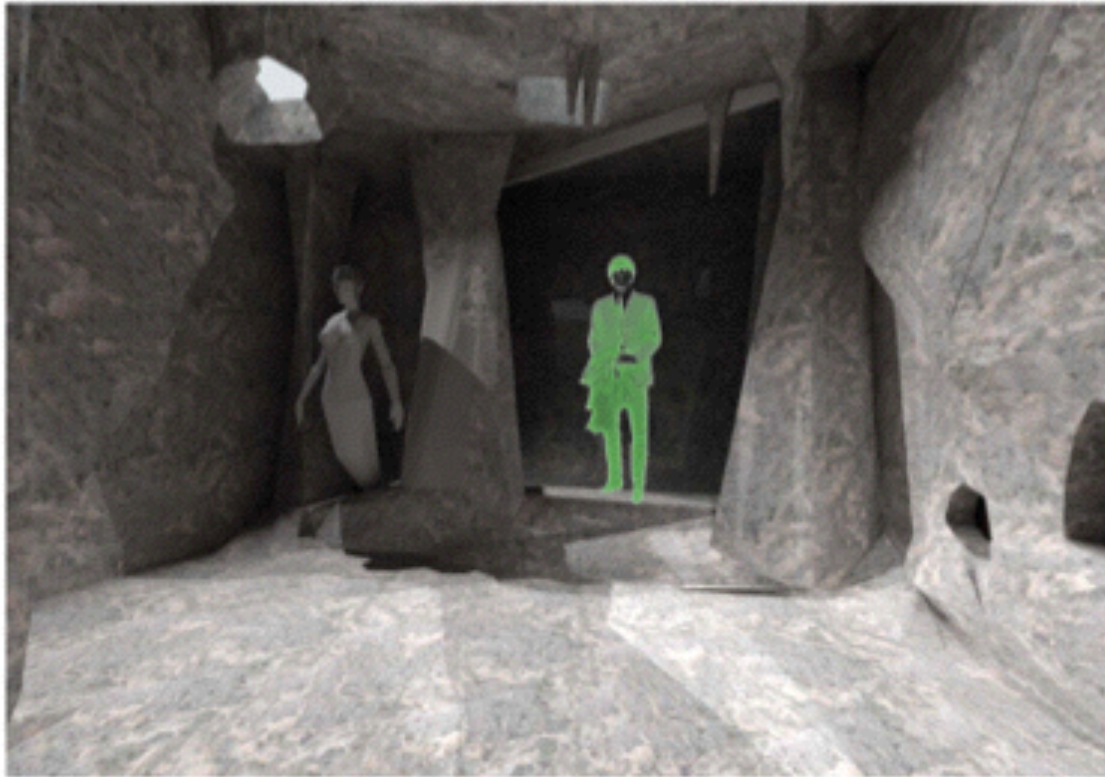


Visitors walk through a shimmering image made of water vapor and light



Heads embedded in the wall come to life as the visitor walks by. Exit is a hidden door below an enormous talking baby head.





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