

# WORKING IN THEATRE: Scenic Lead

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



The **scenic lead**—also known as the lead scenic artist or scenic charge—is responsible for creating the painted parts of a scenic design. A scenic artist needs to know a variety of paint treatment processes that may include aging, marbling (making something built from wood look like marble or some other material), and wood-graining (making material look like wood). Scenic artists can develop these skills by studying with more experienced artists or by studying theatre production in college. The job also requires innovation and creativity, depending on what the director or designer of a production envisions and what resources are at hand. Professional scenic artists may be members of IATSE (the stagehands union) and are either staff members at larger theatres or independent contractors hired on a per-project basis.



Note to students: You'll get the most out of this video if you watch it twice. Watch it once, and then read the questions below before the second viewing.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1 Katie says much of her job involves figuring out how to turn something two-dimensional into something three-dimensional. Explain how that might apply in another job. Think about football players looking at diagrams from their playbook, or a plumber looking at blueprints (the diagrams of a house).

---

---

---

2 Katie talks about “hands-on” or on-the-job learning, although she did study at a university. Think about your own learning style. Do you learn best from reading about something, watching a demonstration, or actually trying it out?

---

---

---

3 Scenic leads coordinate work flow: they figure out the order in which things must be done to accomplish tasks best. How do you organize your own work flow, as a student and/or young theatre artist? Is that something you enjoy doing, or is it challenging for you?

---

---

---

4 Katie mentions needing knowledge of scenic materials. Besides wood and paint, what other materials might be used in a stage set?

---

---

---

# WORKING IN THEATRE: Scenic Lead



---

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1 What can you identify with or what speaks strongly to you in the video?

---

---

---

2 A scenic lead is a very physical job. Katie may be on her feet a lot or need to lift pieces of scenery. Does that appeal to you? What might that tell you about careers you might pursue?

---

---

---

3 The title of Katie's job is scenic lead, which implies that she gives instructions to others to accomplish her job. Describe a time when you took on a leadership role in or out of school. Did you enjoy it?

---

---

---

4 Katie tries to understand what a designer wants, even if they might not have the words to describe it. She interprets what is needed from drawings and conversations. Describe something you had to accomplish when you only had general or incomplete instructions. How did you decide what to do? Did it make you uncomfortable, or did you enjoy making your own choices?

---

---

---

## FURTHER ACTIVITIES:

1 Take Center Theatre Group's Career Path Quiz. First, answer the questions for yourself, and then take it a second time as you think a scenic lead might answer them. What conclusions can you draw about your interests?

2 Research opportunities for volunteering or internships in a career area that interests you. For example, you might search for "internships beauty" if you are interested in learning about make-up or hair styling.

3 Some people may see the job of scenic lead to be traditionally a "man's job." Think of a career that has a gender stereotype. Why do you think that is/was the case? If attitudes have changed, discuss how. If they have not changed, what do you think might be done about that?

---

Visit [CTGLA.org/WorkingInTheatre](http://CTGLA.org/WorkingInTheatre) and select "Design Tech."

**“A scenic artist needs to know a variety of paint treatment processes that may include aging, marbling, and wood-graining.”**