

Steppenwolf Education's Maker May Week 4 – Maker Challenge Reimagining Masks with Elizabeth Flauto

In the current global pandemic, we are all finding that we need to make some adjustments to how we see the world and each other, as well as how we behave. The wearing of protective gear, especially masks, is important to keeping everyone safe and helping to lessen the spread of the coronavirus but is also very hard for some people to accommodate. For this project our aim is to use what we know about masks in history, culture, the arts and in practical use, to reframe this potentially distressing accessory. Together we will envision one-of-a-kind, positive, communicative, artful, humorous, and personal conceptions of what the mask can do for us, above and beyond their practical use.

The Challenge: Create a mask (or concept for a mask) that combines your practical needs with your own self-expression. Your mask should make a statement and reflect what you hope to put out into the world.

Step 1: Consider a way you'd like to reframe the current necessity for wearing masks.

- *What would you like to say, express, or communicate with your mask?*
- *How do you feel about mask-wearing? How are you feeling in general?*
- *What do you want others to understand about you based on your mask?*
- *How do you want others to feel when they see you in your mask?*
- *What is something that seems negative to you about wearing masks, and how can you make it positive?*

Step 2: Consider what the mask needs to do for you in a practical sense.

- *Does it need to fit specific safety regulations, such as covering your nose and mouth, be able to be cleaned/sanitized, filter out dangerous particles, etc?*
- *Does it need to be easily assumed and removed?*
- *Do you need to be able to have full range of vision and motion while wearing the mask?*
- *Do you need to be able to wear your glasses (and not have them fog up) with your mask on?*
- *Do you need to be able to show your mouth or other part of your face?*
- *Do you need your mask to be able to tie/attach somewhere other than around your ears?*

Step 3: Consider what you know about masks throughout human history, and consider if there is inspiration to be taken from masks of other times, cultures, and purposes?

Is there anything useful to you in the history of masks in regards to...

- Ritual
- Art
- Mourning
- Storytelling
- Protection
- Intimidation
- Caricature
- Identity
- Freedom
- Concealment

Step 4: Bring your idea to life!

Synthesize what you want your mask to say (**Step 1**) with what it needs to do (**Step 2**) and inform your choices with what comes before (**Step 3**). Your mask can be represented through the following mediums:

- A sketch
- A collage of images
- A 3-D mock-up or prototype
- A fully realized mask
- A photo of you wearing your mask
- A digital image of your mask or your concept
- Or other creative visual representations of your idea

You may also accompany your visuals with a written description, if desired.

NOTE: *If you choose to create a physical representation of this mask, feel free to use whatever materials you have available. We can talk through how you might construct your mask more fully during our session on Thursday.*

Things to consider in your design:

- *What is the scale of your mask? Is it tiny? Is it huge? Does it take up more or less space than your face? How does it relate to the scale/proportion of the rest of your body?*
- *How do you want to use color? Color is only one of 5 elements of design, but it is the most emotional. What is the color impact of your mask? How does it make you feel? What does it evoke?*
- *Are there immediate associations, positive or negative, attached to your mask, and do they support your message? Put your mask in context. What images do your audience (the people at grocery store, for example) already have in their minds? Are you referring to them, evoking them, or avoiding them? And is that what you want?*

FOR THURSDAY, MAY 28

Come ready to share: Some participants will have an opportunity to opt into sharing their mask concepts with Elizabeth. **If you are interested in potentially sharing, please upload any visual images to this Dropbox by 4pm on Thursday, May 28.** Don't worry about it being "finished" or "perfect." You only had 48 hours to create this! This is an in-process sharing of our collective work. And no worries if you would not like to share, we will have time for about 5 or so participants to share with Elizabeth.

SHARE YOUR CONCEPT VIRTUALLY

Whether on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook – use the hashtag **#virtualstepped** or tag **@steppenwolfthtr** (Instagram and Twitter) or **@steppenwolftheatre** (Facebook) in your posts!
use the hashtag **#virtualstepped**

If you tag us in the caption, we will not be able to re-share, please tag us in the photo itself!