

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

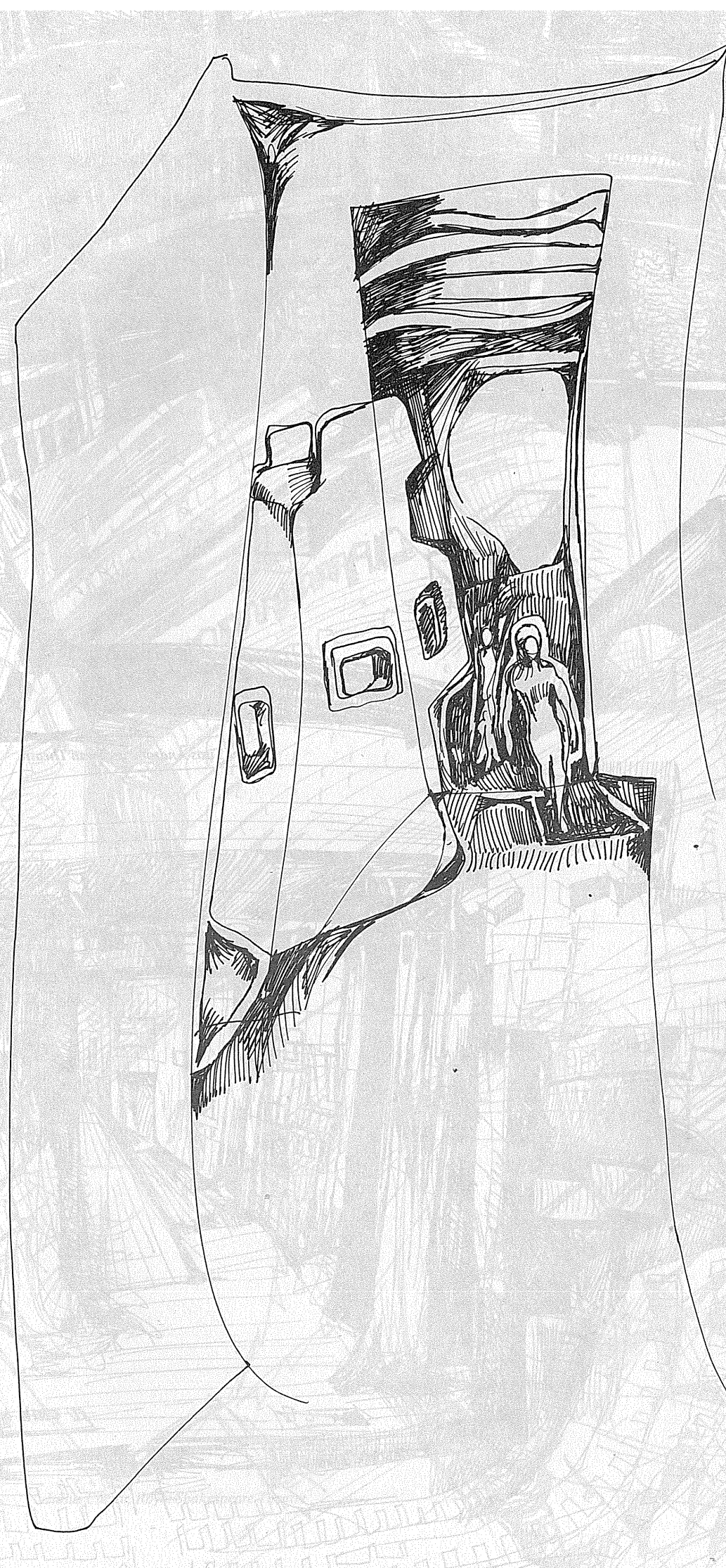


KATHLEEN BARRETT

DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS MADE IN
REHEARSALS AND PRODUCTION WORKSHOPS
DURING THE STRATFORD-UPON-AVON SEASON



Twelfth Night, Royal Shakespeare Theatre



KATHLEEN BARRETT

Artist in residence

RSC Stratford 1987

Over the past five years the RSC Collection has revived a tradition of paintings inspired by performances and the preparations for them. The RSC Collection of paintings started in 1881 and, like the Theatre, were part of the original Shakespeare Memorial . . . The Collection has a variety of such works including Garrick by Carter, Priscilla Horton as Ariel by MacIse, Fabia Drake as Lady Macbeth by Sickert, Paul Scofield as the Clown by Dame Laura Knight, Edith Evans as Volumnia by Buhler, Laurence Olivier as Macbeth by Ruskin Spear, Anthony Quayle as Falstaff by Dobell and David Warner by Cecil Beaton. These paintings express a character and mood, and reflect something of their period, as changing styles of performance do. The theatre is a natural home for all the arts. Each generation has its own views on literature, music, drama, scenic effects and theatre craft, which are ever-changing. Often these new interpretations challenge views which, mistakenly, are believed to be 'traditional'. The painter today, like the actor and director, has a totally new personal starting point, each adding to the evolution of their craft, not in imitation of the past.

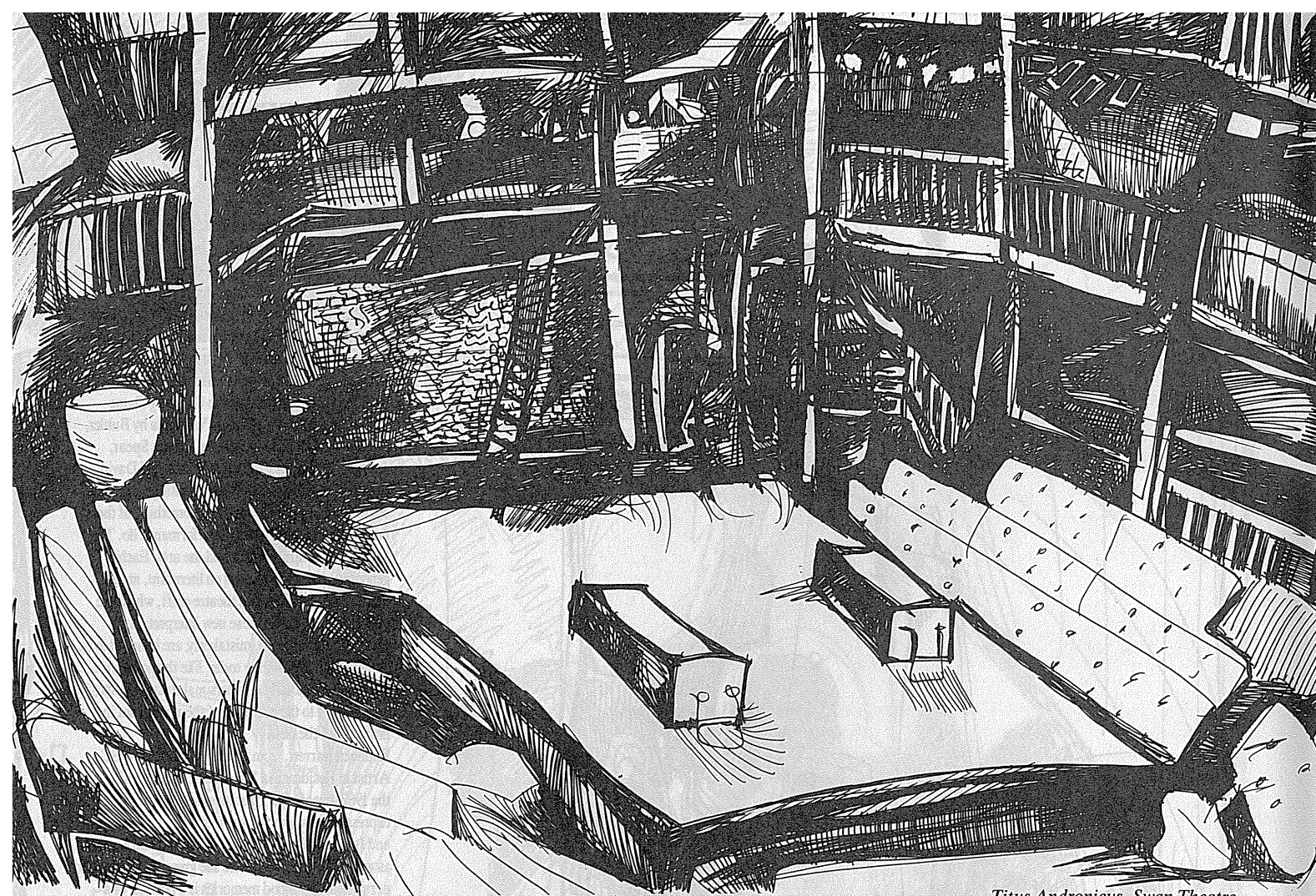
Kathleen Barrett, from Chicago, joined the RSC as Artist in Residence in Stratford at the beginning of the 1987 season. Her figurative, symbolist/ expressionist work grew out of studies in America and Italy. She has exhibited in England and Scotland as well as in America, where she grew up. One of her permanent childhood memories is a portrait of a famous English actress, Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Reynolds, like many of his contemporaries – Romney, Wheatley, Northcote and Fuseli – painted for the famous 18th Century Shakespeare Gallery created by John Boydell, which was dedicated to imaginative paintings of Shakespearean subjects. The RSC Collection has fourteen of the Boydell originals. Unknowingly, Kathleen Barrett contributed to this tradition of painting imaginative scenes from Shakespeare when, two years ago, she completed a series of six characters from Shakespeare. It was through an exhibition of these in London that her work became known to us.

In March 1987, a day before JULIUS CAESAR rehearsals started, she arrived in Stratford with an easel, paints, canvas, brushes and sketchbooks, and immediately set about her project with extraordinary determination and care, making contact easily with members of the Company, spending hours in rehearsals, observing costume fittings and the associated workshop activities, and afterwards bursting into powerful colour on big canvases, painted in a tiny cottage.

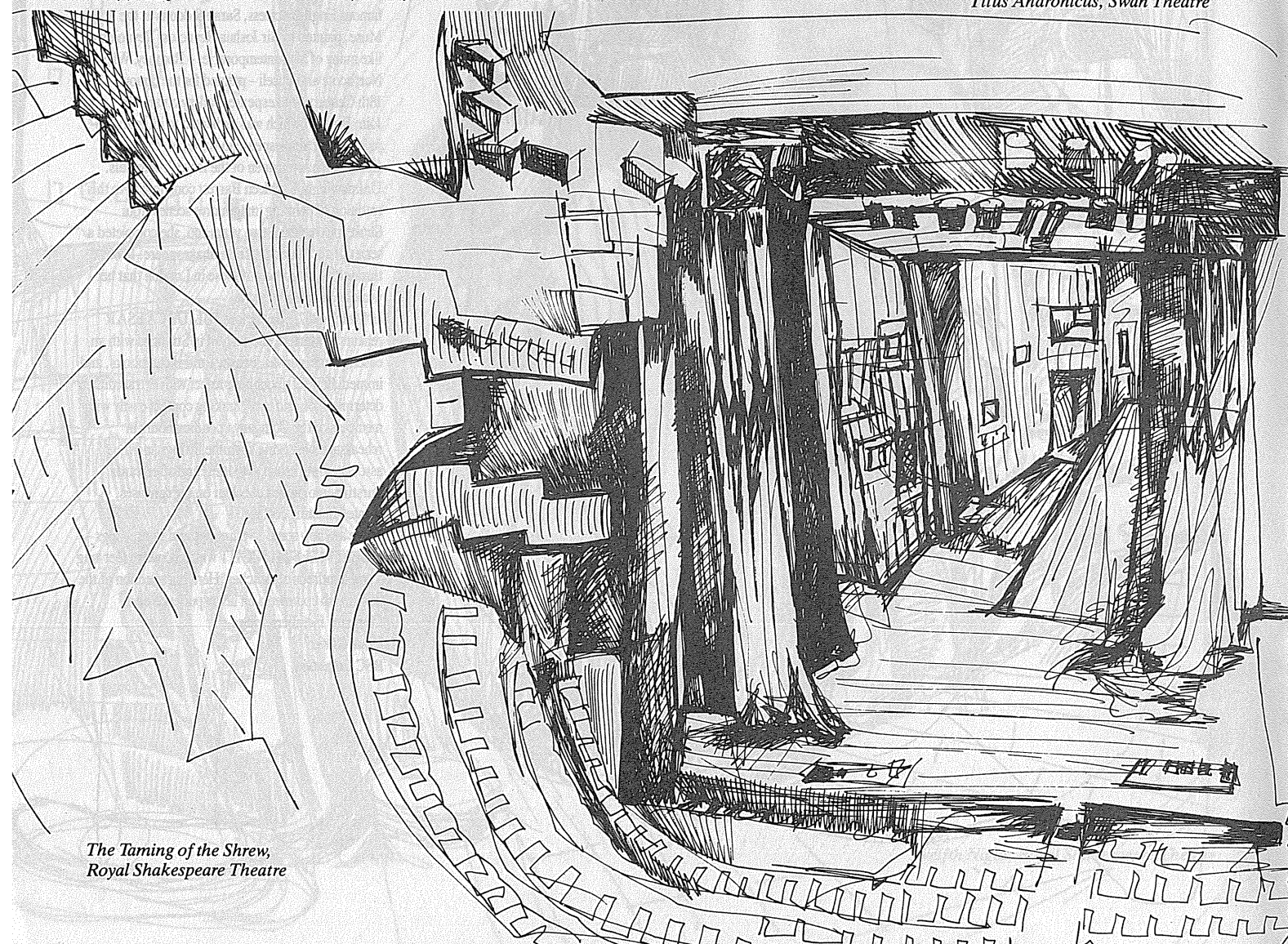
There are now some 25 paintings and 15 drawings – one of TWELFTH NIGHT which is twelve feet long – and hundreds of sketches. Here is a selection of the work, with comments on her experience and Company members' views

Brian Glover

RSC Collection



Titus Andronicus, Swan Theatre



*The Taming of the Shrew,
Royal Shakespeare Theatre*



Julius Caesar, Royal Shakespeare Theatre

Spring 1987, Stratford-upon-Avon

Notes

Beginnings and introductions to the theatrescape – many new images – like a pocket full of coins – a great shell space divided to become a warren of lofts, caverns, eyries, rows of rooms, winding stairs, hidden doors, passageways – then – as an Italian city opening suddenly to a grand place – an auditorium and stage.

There are three theatres – two, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Swan Theatre come together like bookends with “backstage” between – the third, called “The Other Place” is down the Waterside road.

Around the theatres – a town within a town – that can be platted only by knowing where each house or building can be found and what work is done there. Within – all sorts of objects begin to accumulate – equipment, tools, materials, papers – and the people whose work will govern each space still seem like travellers in a station – checking schedules and waiting – with destinations – still not known to me. Suddenly work begins – everywhere – drills, saws, music, cutting and fitting costumes, collecting, carving props.

A permanent set, called ‘the brick box’ is being constructed in the RST – it will incorporate the theatre’s original wall.

The first play, JULIUS CAESAR goes into rehearsal.

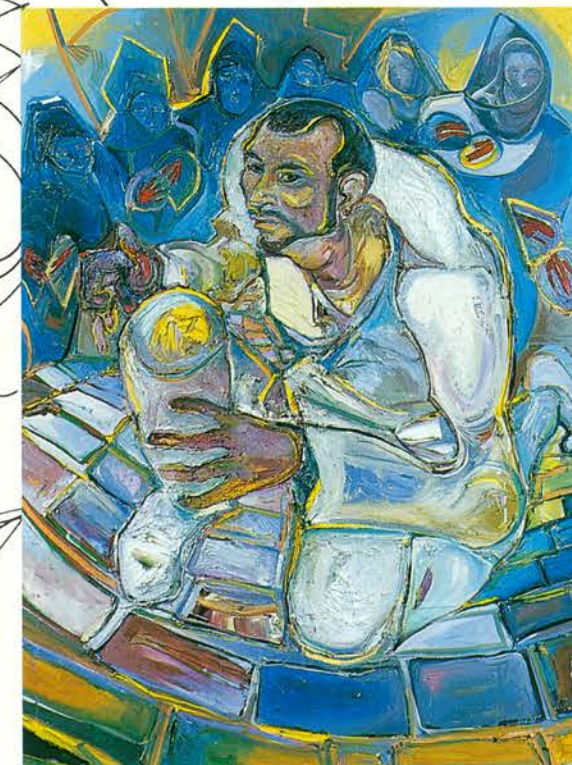
Julius Caesar, 72 inches × 48 inches/oil on canvas



Brutus, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil on canvas



Cassius and the Conspirators, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil on canvas



JULIUS CAESAR

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
William Shakespeare
director Terry Hands
designer Farrah

A rehearsal room four flights above the Swan – sketching scenes in seconds – the full cast – a single compact power – Brutus' sound – animal pain at assassination.

Technical rehearsals on stage – director, Terry Hands with microphone – people from different departments – design, wardrobe adjustments – a bank of lighting computers – technicians – the stage lit like fire – tunics, Roman/space-age – kid-glove boots. Two days of drawing in a dark auditorium from the circle near the lighting control box – an actor remarked, 'I saw you up there' – thoughts on actors' sensitivity to audience.

Four canvases begun – the first, CAESAR – decision to juxtapose three scenes: Caesar the Colossus – Brutus bowing not worshipping – the 'Ides of March' warning, a single image of the end of Caesar's rule – the second, BRUTUS, combining Caesar's ghost and 'there is a tide in the affairs of men' speech – two tides? – Third, CASSIUS AND THE CONSPIRATORS, with Caesar's blood on their hands – evoke words from another scene – 'Peace, freedom, liberty' – the fourth, MARK ANTONY, 'mercurial' costume changed during painting – difficulties and revisions – awareness of degree of reality in new subject matter – reaffirmed view that painting must filter through memory/imagination – even after drawing from life.

Nicholas Farrell: For the first three previews of JULIUS CAESAR, I wore a gold loin-cloth and half a pint of instant tan. Terry Hands decided – no doubt wisely – this wasn't a good idea, so I was then put into whites like the rest of the cast. But Kathleen nonetheless produced a striking portrait featuring the briefly-glimpsed costume, the first canvas of many executed during her stay. For me, though, the best of her work is the free-flowing pen-and-ink drawings.

Terry Hands: Kathleen Barrett was a fellow artist searching as we were for interpretive expression.

Mark Antony, 72 inches × 30 inches/oil on canvas



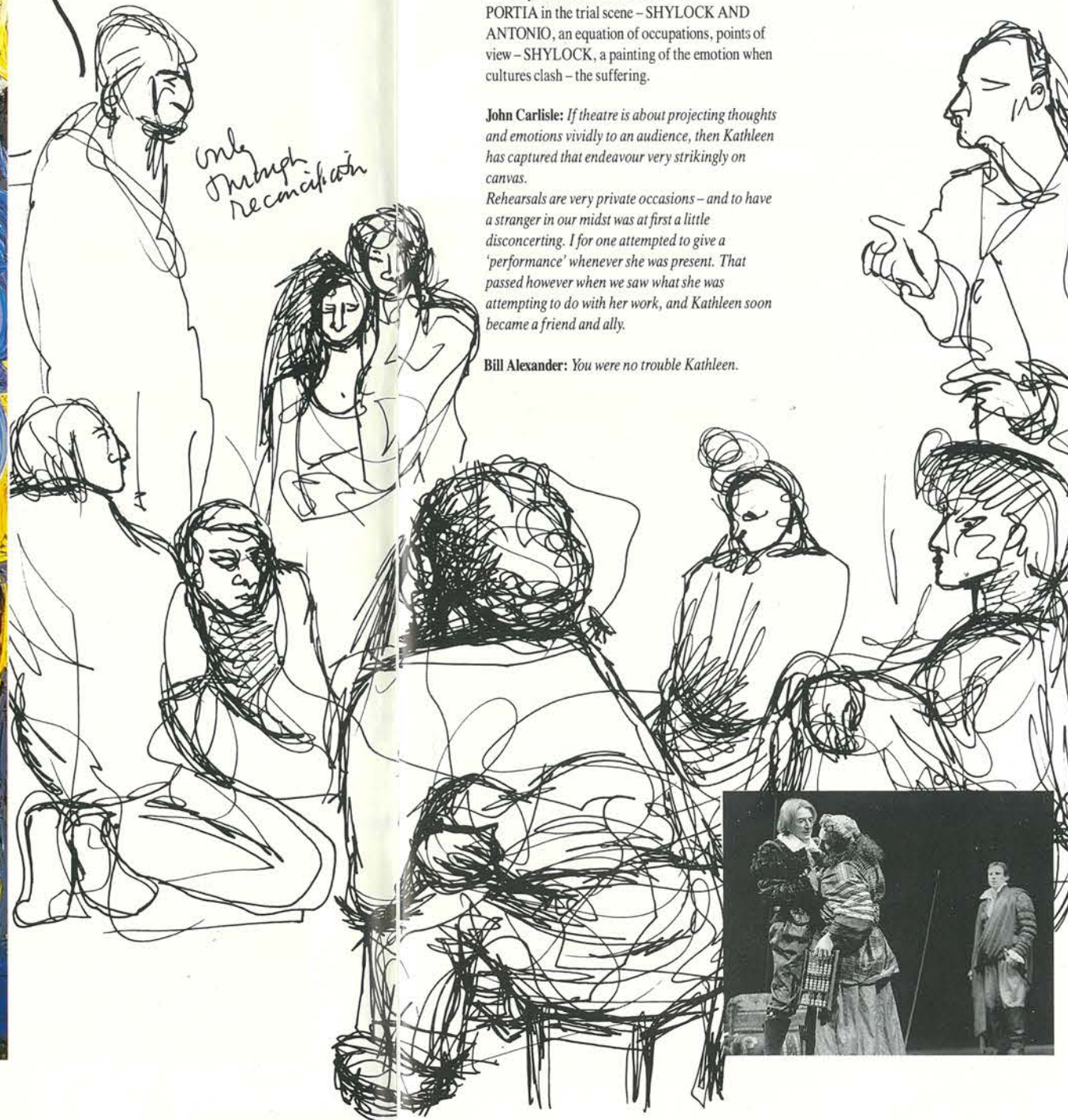
The Gold Casket,
36 inches × 24 inches / oil on canvas



The Lead Casket,
36 inches × 24 inches / oil on canvas



Shylock and Antonio, 72 inches × 48 inches/oil on canvas



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
William Shakespeare
director Bill Alexander
designer Kit Surrey

Rehearsals in temporary building opposite
The Other Place.

An energy of personalities – caricatures emerge –
physical 'action sketches' from Antony Sher – a
Turkish Jewish Shylock – Bill Alexander speaks of
rhythms – discussions, director and cast, to resolve
the final scenes.

Technical rehearsals on stage – elaborate costumes –
some wildly coloured – Moor, gold and turquoise –
Jessica, red and green.

Thoughts about the play – Antonio, speaks of Venice'
economic need for cultures, races to co-exist –
Shylock, biblical defence of a 'middle man's' profit –
from Jacob's sheep breeding – Portia, disguised as a
man, otherwise 'a maiden hath no tongue but
thought' – social changes, evolving law – modern
problems – the same after 400 years.

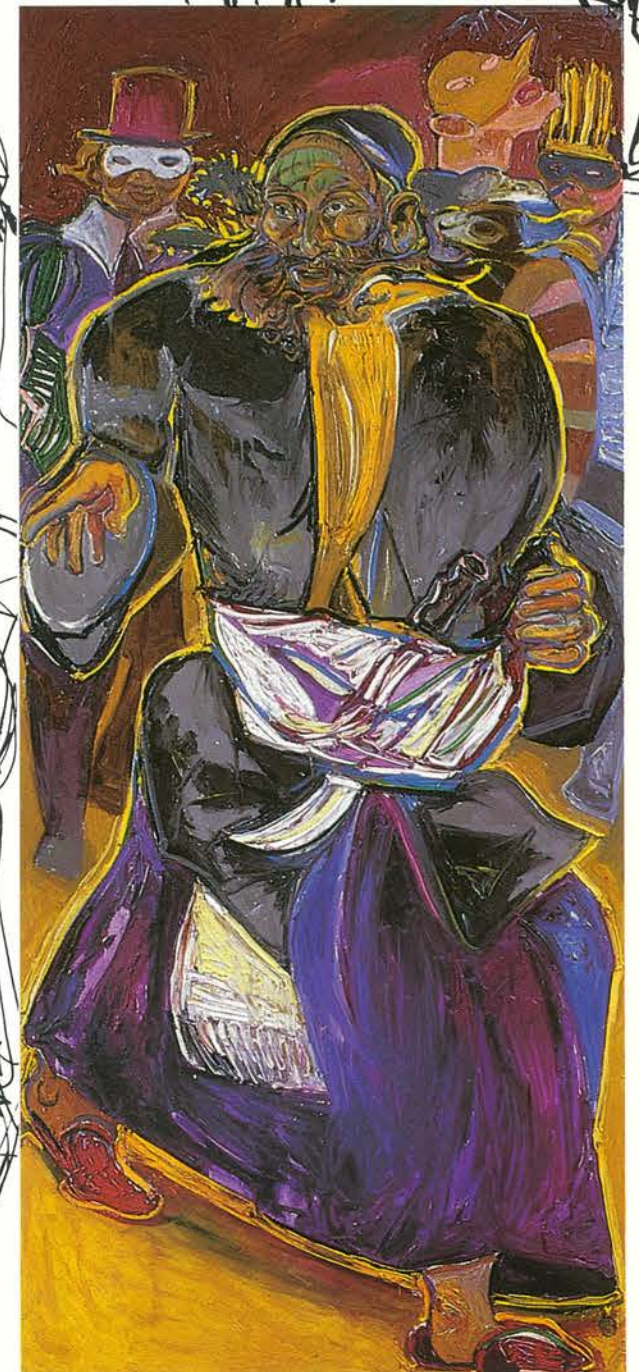
Six paintings; the three caskets, GOLD, SILVER,
and LEAD, which painted on Shakespeare's
birthday, included a tribute of flowers.

PORTIA in the trial scene – SHYLOCK AND
ANTONIO, an equation of occupations, points of
view – SHYLOCK, a painting of the emotion when
cultures clash – the suffering.

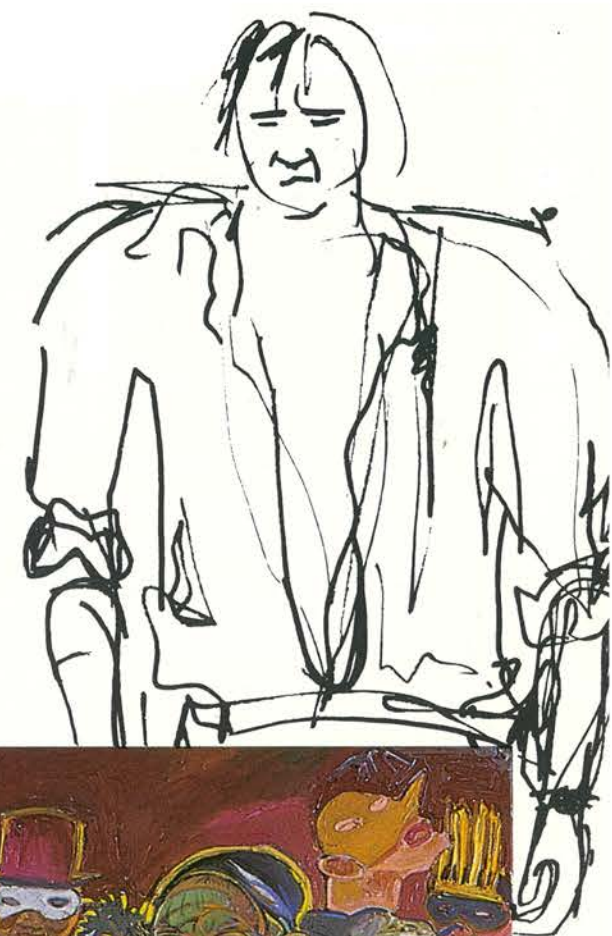
John Carlisle: *If theatre is about projecting thoughts
and emotions vividly to an audience, then Kathleen
has captured that endeavour very strikingly on
canvas.*

*Rehearsals are very private occasions – and to have
a stranger in our midst was at first a little
disconcerting. I for one attempted to give a
'performance' whenever she was present. That
passed however when we saw what she was
attempting to do with her work, and Kathleen soon
became a friend and ally.*

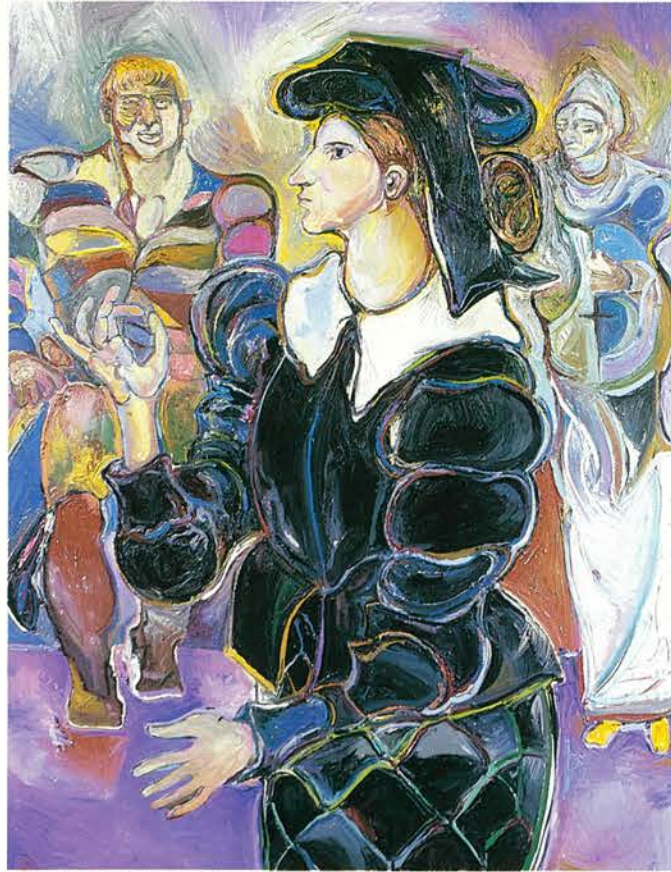
Bill Alexander: *You were no trouble Kathleen.*



Shylock and the Venetians, 72 inches × 30 inches/oil on canvas



The Silver Casket,
36 inches × 24 inches / oil on canvas



Portia, the trial scene, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil on canvas

*A maiden hath no
tongue but thought*



*Lavinia
from Titus Andronicus*

TITUS ANDRONICUS

SWAN THEATRE

William Shakespeare

director Deborah Warner

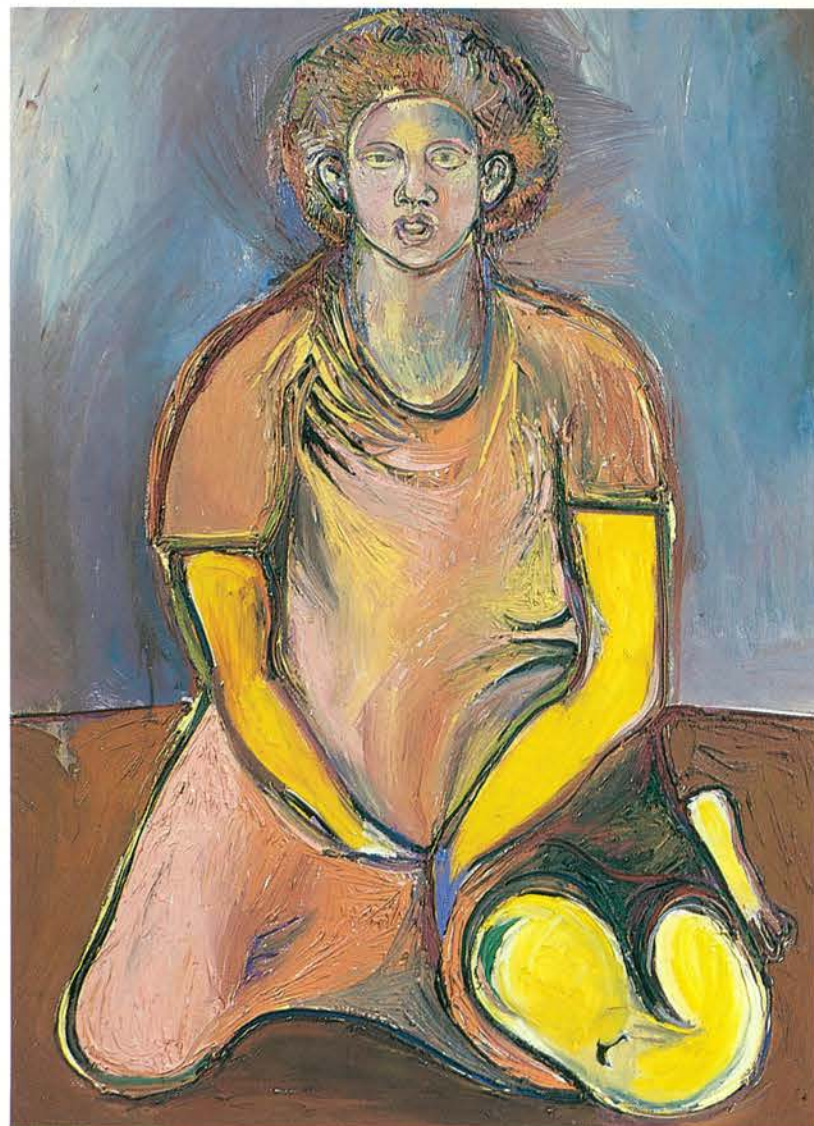
designer Isabella Bywater

TITUS rehearsals – the whole theatre building seemed to vibrate – a fearful drumming – ‘Shakespeare’s bloodiest play’ – Lavinia seemed to rise from the tortured role – a child – mime – someone who didn’t quite understand. Began LAVINIA painting while PORTIA from MERCHANT was still in progress – the thought again of Portia’s words, ‘a maiden hath no tongue but thought’.

Later – a large hand-made piece of Spanish paper – like the surface of the moon – rugged and desolate – chosen for a tempera drawing of TITUS ANDRONICUS.

Brian Cox: I really believe that Kathleen’s style has developed tremendously over the year at Stratford. When I first saw her work I must confess that I wasn’t absolutely sure; it seemed very muscular. But as the season progressed and as her work developed, her drawings of TITUS, and particularly her two panel paintings of the SHREW are quite remarkable. Never in rehearsal was one aware of Kathleen as she always kept a low profile.

Sonia Ritter: I wish I’d talked to you more! You showed a Lavinia that told me I had something else other than my own visual picture – a weight and some curious relationship with the earth, the ground ... I love such BIG pictures!



Lavinia, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil on canvas



Titus Andronicus, 79½ inches × 39¼ inches/egg tempera on paper

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE

William Shakespeare
director Jonathan Miller
designer Stefanos Lazaridis

One month in rehearsals – hundreds of drawings – in the rehearsal room above the Swan Theatre – small groups of two and three actors and full cast – conversations abounding on diverse topics – a great many real domestic stories – Jonathan Miller, director, said the production would be ‘realistic’ – ‘directing is like being a novelist’ – a mention of Marcel Marceau – aiming, perhaps, at a delicate styled glaze – input, ideas, criticism sought from everyone.
Fiona Shaw’s strong sloping stride – Brian Cox’s humour sparring with Barrie Rutter – reflected in the play.
Cicely Berry’s voice drills – and an exhilarated cast – running and reciting – Michael Tubbs’ singing sessions – a glistening sound.
Technical/dress rehearsals – directing on stage – using hands – like moulding clay.
A large two-panel painting of wedding banquet – the three husbands bet whose wife would obey – the ‘shrew’ demonstrates her learned values – ‘Our best weapons are but straws’ – seventeen characters inter-related in this painting – the relationships in the composition were also developed by balances and compromises.

Barrie Rutter: *When I first saw the large SHREW canvas I preened – that’s me in the front; then I screamed – it does not look like me. Fool Rutter! Kathleen’s paintings aren’t meant to be photographs, they’ll last much longer and be seen by far more people than ever saw the 1987 SHREW or MERCHANT or TWELFTH NIGHT!*

Griffith Jones: *You were more than welcome. Your work has a bravura and mystery most actors would recognise and covet.*

George Raistrick: *I must confess at first I wasn’t keen on the idea. I felt the presence of an artist at rehearsal would have the same inhibiting effect and produce the same sort of self-consciousness that a photographer tends to. Not so. And here I must give credit to your discreetness, charm and refreshing lack of ‘arty’ intensity. When you weren’t there I missed having you around.*

Jonathan Miller: *It was rather nice and restful having Kathleen Barrett in rehearsal whose work though related could move at a different rate because of its own independence. She was extremely tactful and reassuring like a nanny by the nursery fire.*

Fiona Shaw: *It was thrilling to have her. As Virginia Woolf said in Edna O’Brien’s play “If we don’t live venturously, what is the point.”*



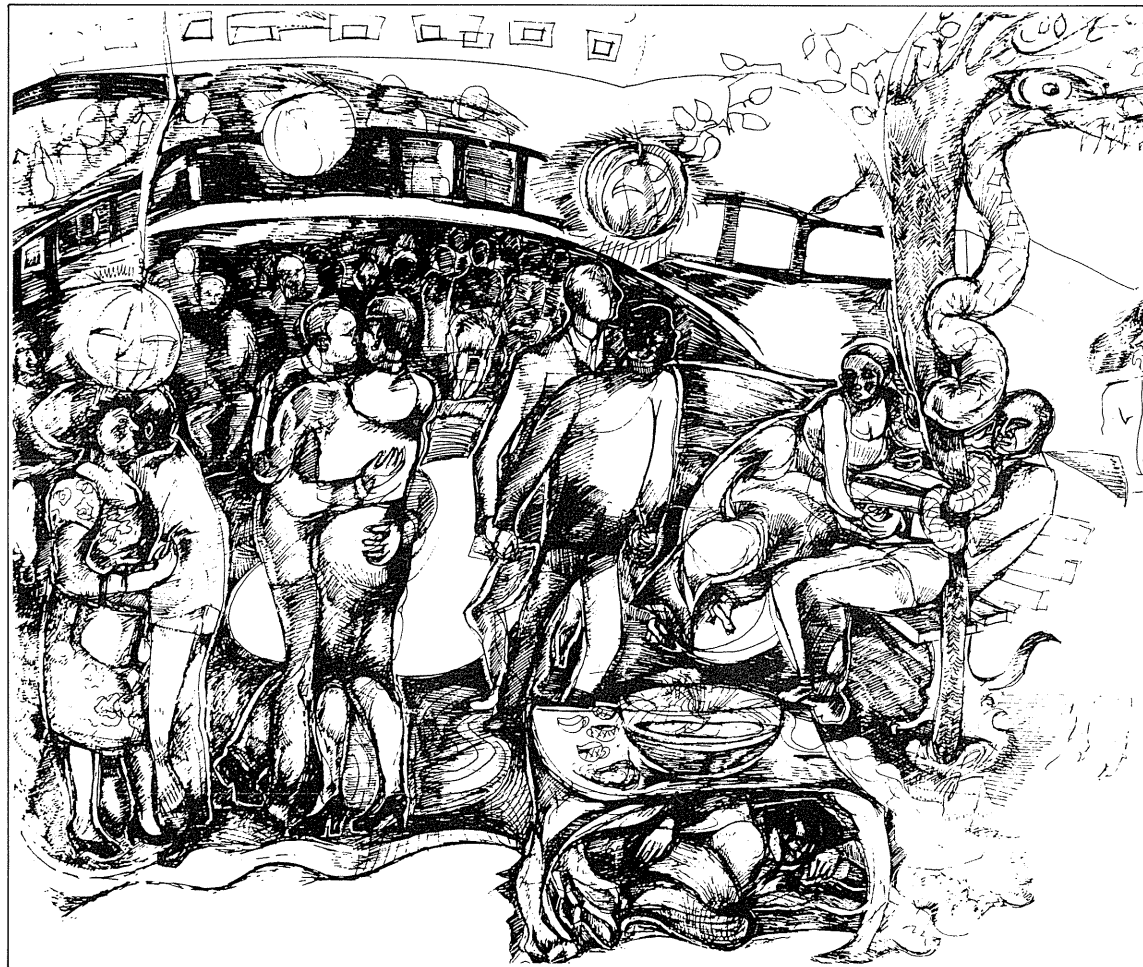


The Taming of the Shrew, 72 inches × 96 inches, two panels/oil on canvas

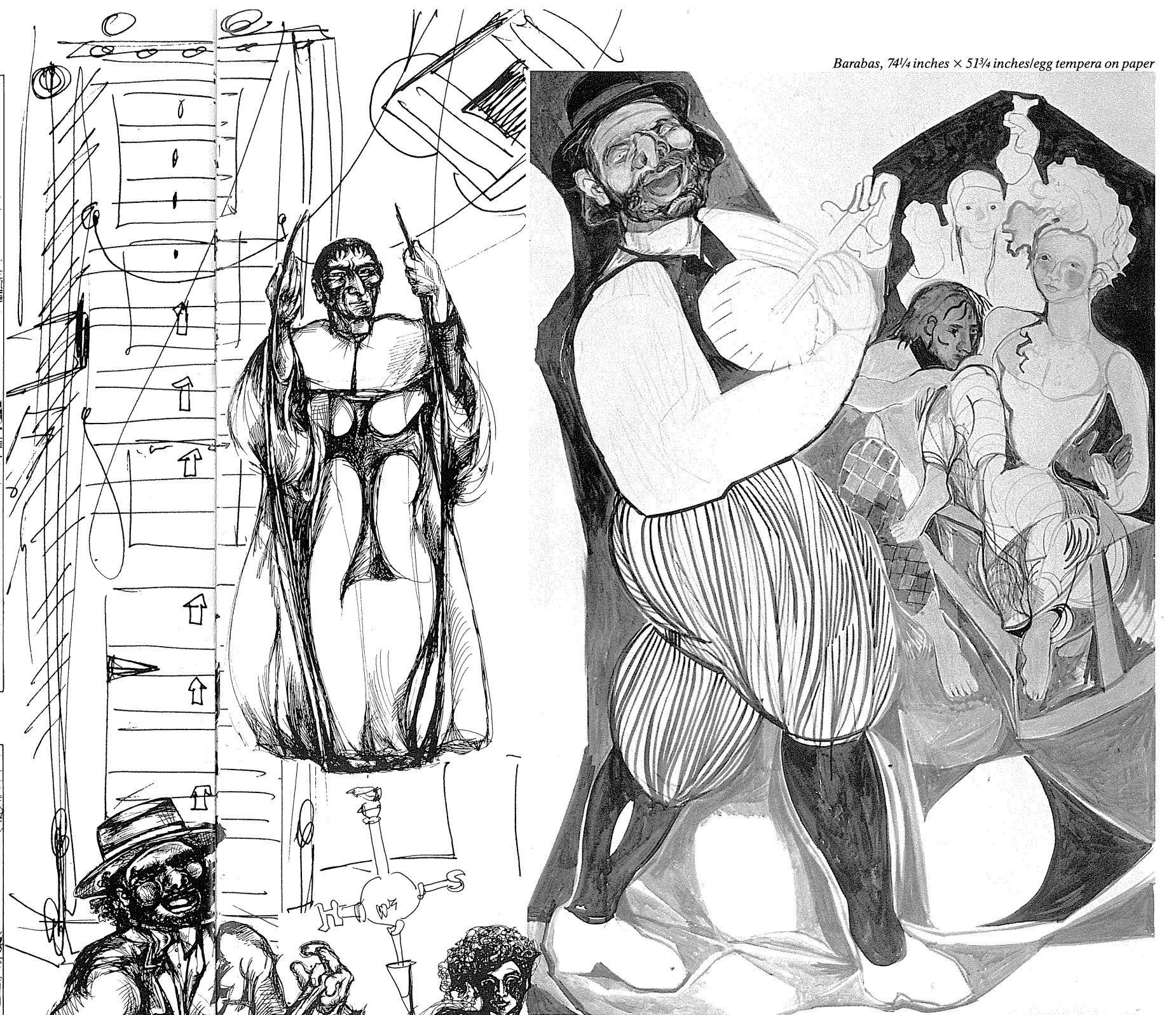
Fashion, pen and ink on paper



Temptation, pen and ink on paper



Barabas, 74 1/4 inches x 51 3/4 inches/egg tempera on paper



THE JEW OF MALTA

SWAN THEATRE

Christopher Marlowe

director Barry Kyle

designer Bob Crowley

The detachment of the play – great contrast to *MERCHANT* – a light touch in the worst of events – Barabas said 'the only sin is ignorance' – survival saga portrayed brightly – epitomized by bawdy insert – Alun Armstrong playing a tiny banjolele sang a French song – to join in this mood – a large tempera painting of this scene – raucous artwork.



A Question of Geography, 72 inches x 72 inches/oil on canvas



A QUESTION OF GEOGRAPHY

THE OTHER PLACE

John Berger and Nella Bielski

director John Caird

designer Sue Blane

At The Other Place – one feels on stage, in the play – intimacy becoming realism – audiences walk by the props unable to resist laying a hand on a book – patting the back of a chair – as if their own – daring successfully elegant nude scene – not shocking – integrated – basic to the touching emotion of the play – perhaps the meaning – humanism in the most arcane place/time – a large square canvas of the table scene started that night after the play (the SHREW table picture also in progress). Revisited GEOGRAPHY to check details – equally moving – very few changes to the painting.



MEASURE FOR MEASURE

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE

William Shakespeare

director Nicholas Hytner

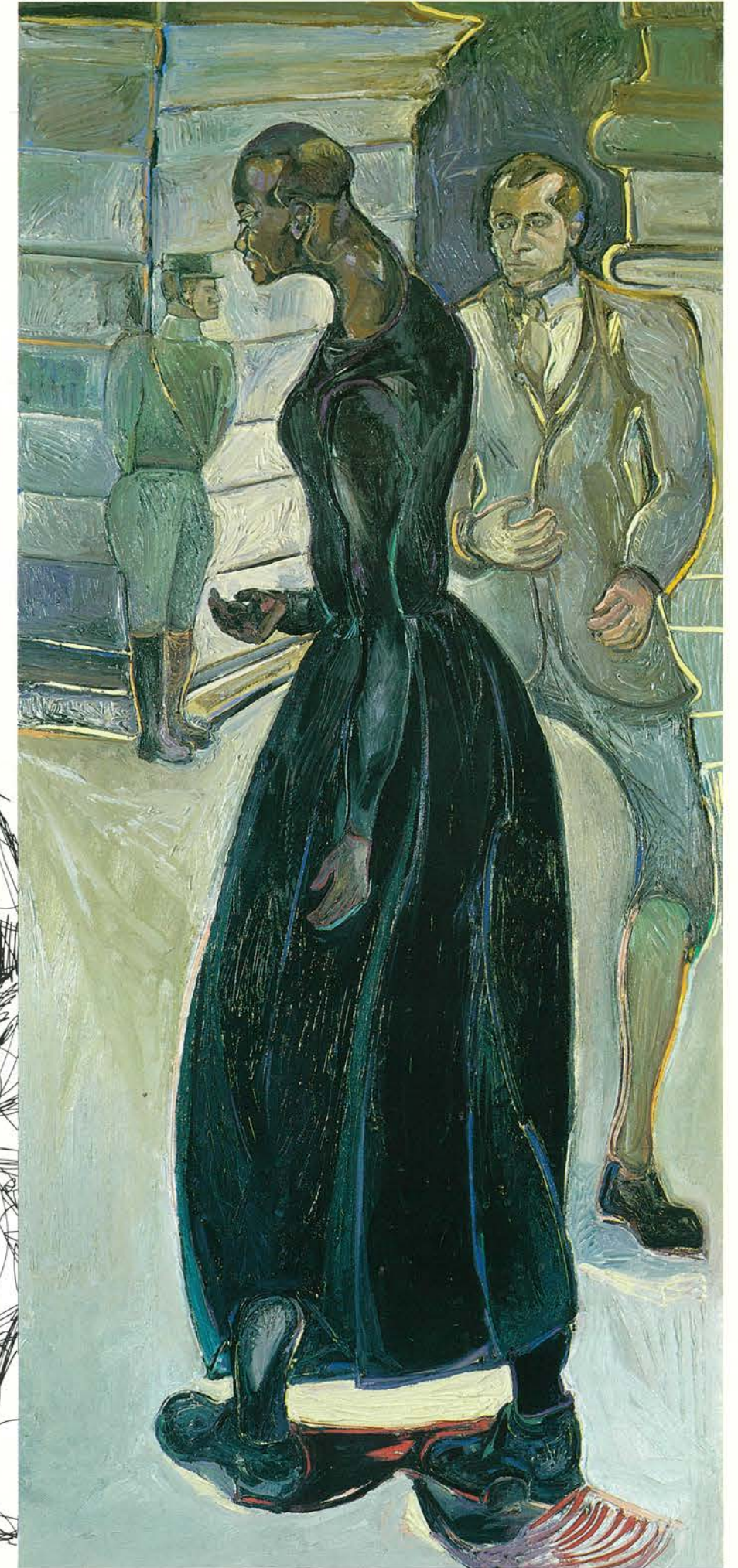
designer Mark Thompson

Watched the giant set go on to the main stage – greys and blacks – great columns – mammoth statement of the state/bureaucracy – a Viennese architecture – costumes that were and were not of history – 18th century plus a sleek/eclectic modern.

Technical – dress rehearsals – a stark and serious production – the stage set – very changeable – with heavy industrial-like movements – the ringing sound of the Duke's voice (Roger Allam) – a ribald humour/colour of the 'street-life' – many drawings – again in a dark auditorium – an ironic/ominous and graceful impression from the line 'oh pretty Isabella' – the painting of Isabella – based on this line – would be taller than life and narrow.



Isabella, 84 inches x 36 inches/oil on canvas



Is only this
to be sampled
Descent
some
rose
by sun
some
in white
but
this future
man subduces
galle

THE NEW INN

SWAN THEATRE

Ben Jonson
director John Caird
designer Sue Blane

The cast were doing research – studying 'Ben Jonson – while rehearsing – 'a great pleasure' some said – a deeper way in.

The technical rehearsals were a wonder of elan – music – a very inn-like set, able to house nineteen people, was almost another character – creaking and groaning staircases – crosspatched – added action – the play was warm, funny, bizarre and romantic – all glowing – with a mouse here and a spider there. Jug, the little maid, who said nothing – in a way spoke for the play visually – clogs – broom and one half-closed eye (from a fight?) – the painting was done in an equally outrageous 24 hours.

Sally George: To have an artist in residence is, I think, a wonderful opportunity for both actors and artist.

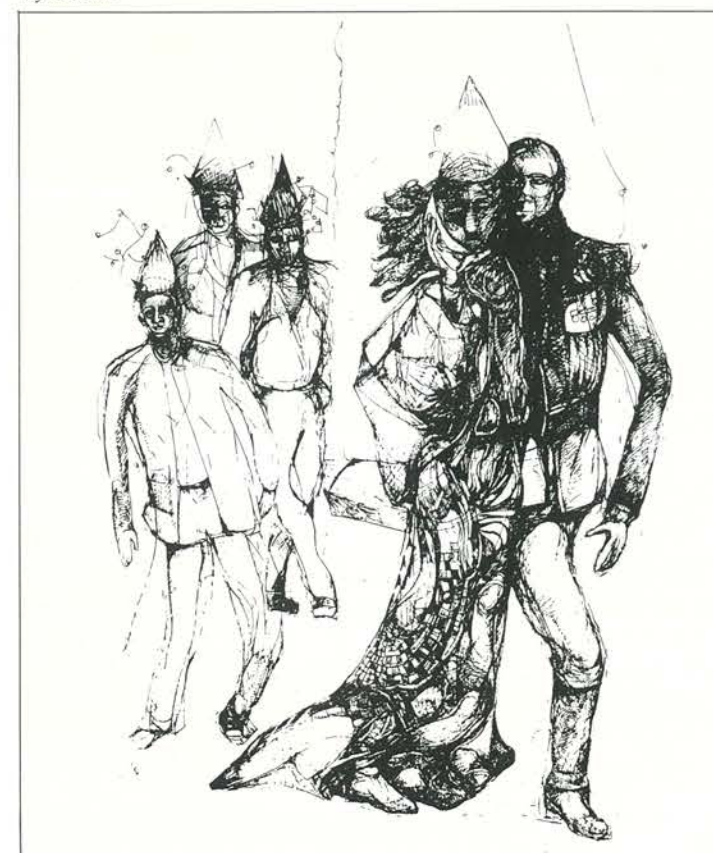
The picture of Jug I was so pleased about as it seemed to capture so much of the heart of the character as I feel when I play it.



The New Inn, 60 inches × 48 inches/oil on canvas



Hyde Park



HYDE PARK

SWAN THEATRE

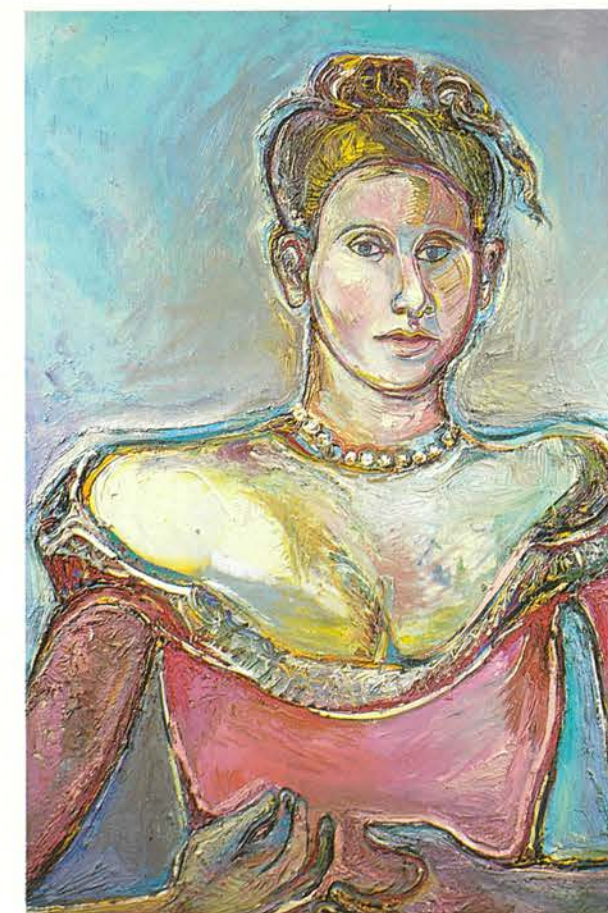
James Shirley
director Barry Kyle
designer George Howland

While intense CAESAR subjects continued – actors backstage and in the Green Room appeared in HYDE PARK costumes – a sense of two completely different worlds co-mingled – HYDE PARK set in pastel colours in the Swan – back-to-back with CAESAR, brick red, black and white, in RST – a pleasure and relief in this contrast – HYDE PARK confection after CAESAR 'meat'.

Four pen and ink drawings after seeing the production – magical or feminine subjects – then a simple portrait, JULIETTA, an idea to paint, no other idea than beauty – only a part of the play – yet perhaps an important one.

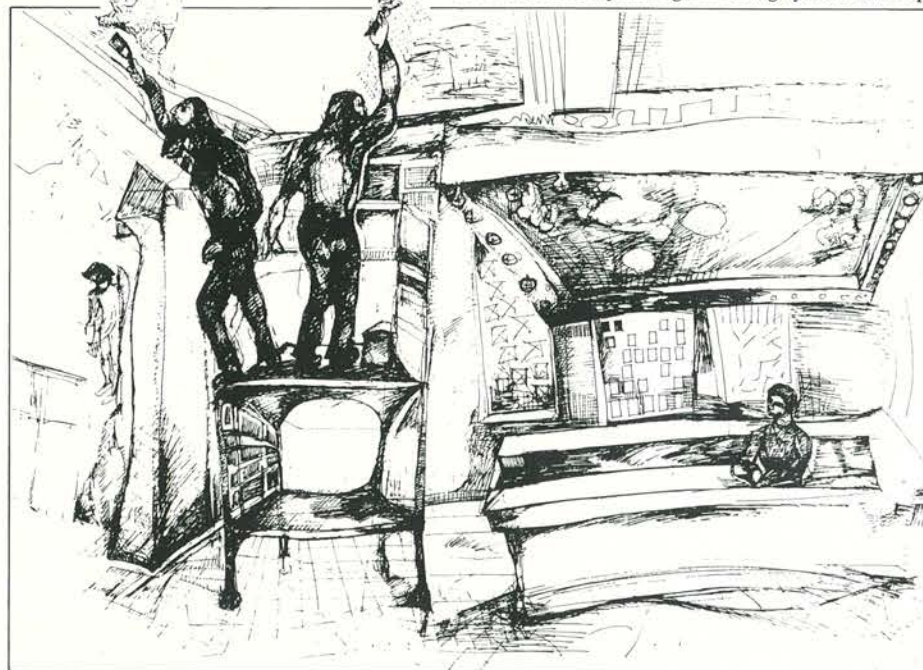
Felicity Dean: To have an artist in residence I think gives an interesting perspective to our work in the theatre.

A collaboration of art forms is essential for keeping artistic boundaries open and free from repressive stereotyping.



Julietta, 36 inches × 24 inches/oil on canvas

RSC collection, painting the ceiling of the bookshop



The Green room

THE WORKSHOPS

Progressing away from the stages is a networked maze of spaces and activities – with the feeling of a medieval town-plan – where spaces have been filled and then organized – built upon the needs of certain skills or work – the overall character – a collection of special crafts – of improvising – inventing – making doll's house trappings on a life-size scale.

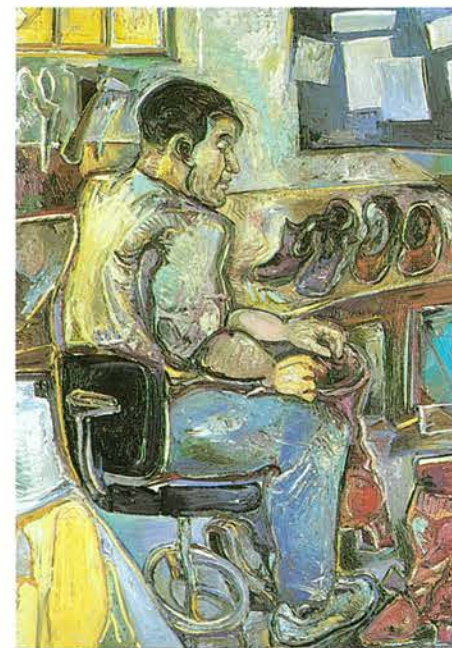
Each workroom and workshop has its own specialized tools, machines – each an oriental bazaar of raw materials.

Drafting tables to organize unique and fascinating mechanics/mobility – the special timing and functionings for the stage are built alongside the fantastic visuals.

Visiting one feels a self-contained completeness in each department so that all other work surrounding seems forgotten – yet crammed bulletin boards hint the ultimate merger – the communal single purpose. Eventually everyone and everything is drawn back to the theatre's stage.



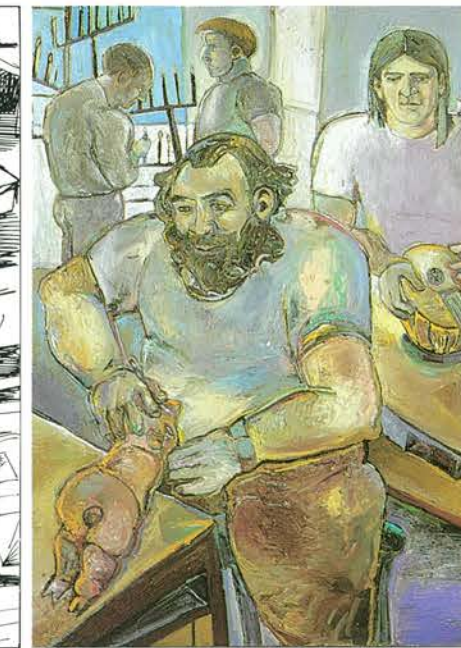
Scenic Workshop machines/drawing



Boots for New Inn, the boot shop, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil



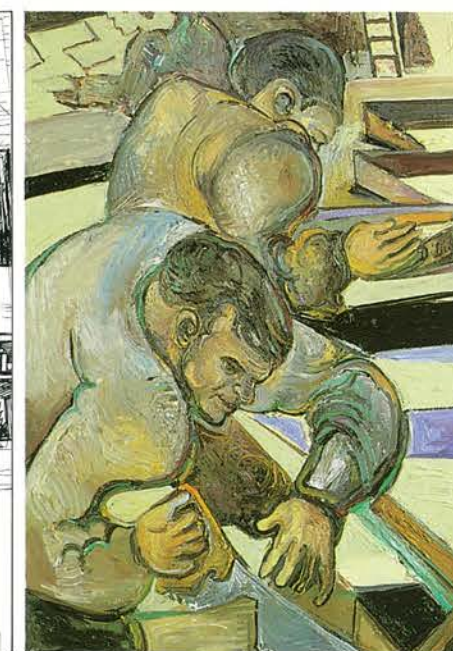
The Scenic Workshop/drawing



The prop shop, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil



The prop shop/drawing



Scenery for Shrew, the scenic workshop, 48 inches × 36 inches/oil



Wardrobe sewing/drawing



Norma cutting ladies costumes, 36 inches × 24 inches/oil



The prop shop/drawing



Teresa cutting men's costumes, 36 inches × 24 inches/oil

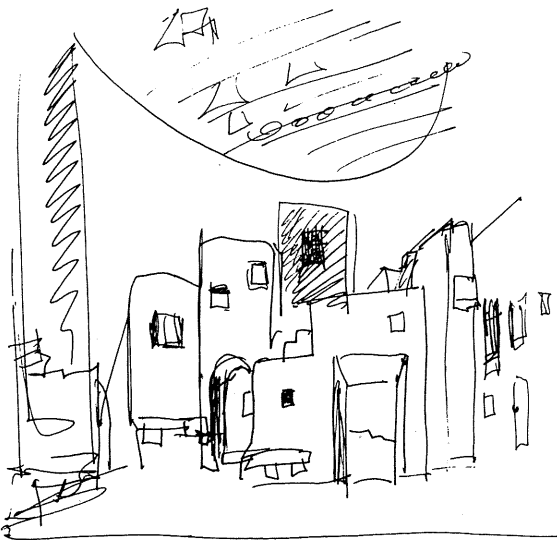
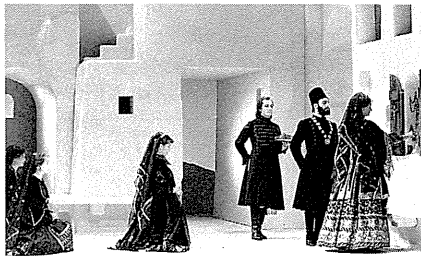


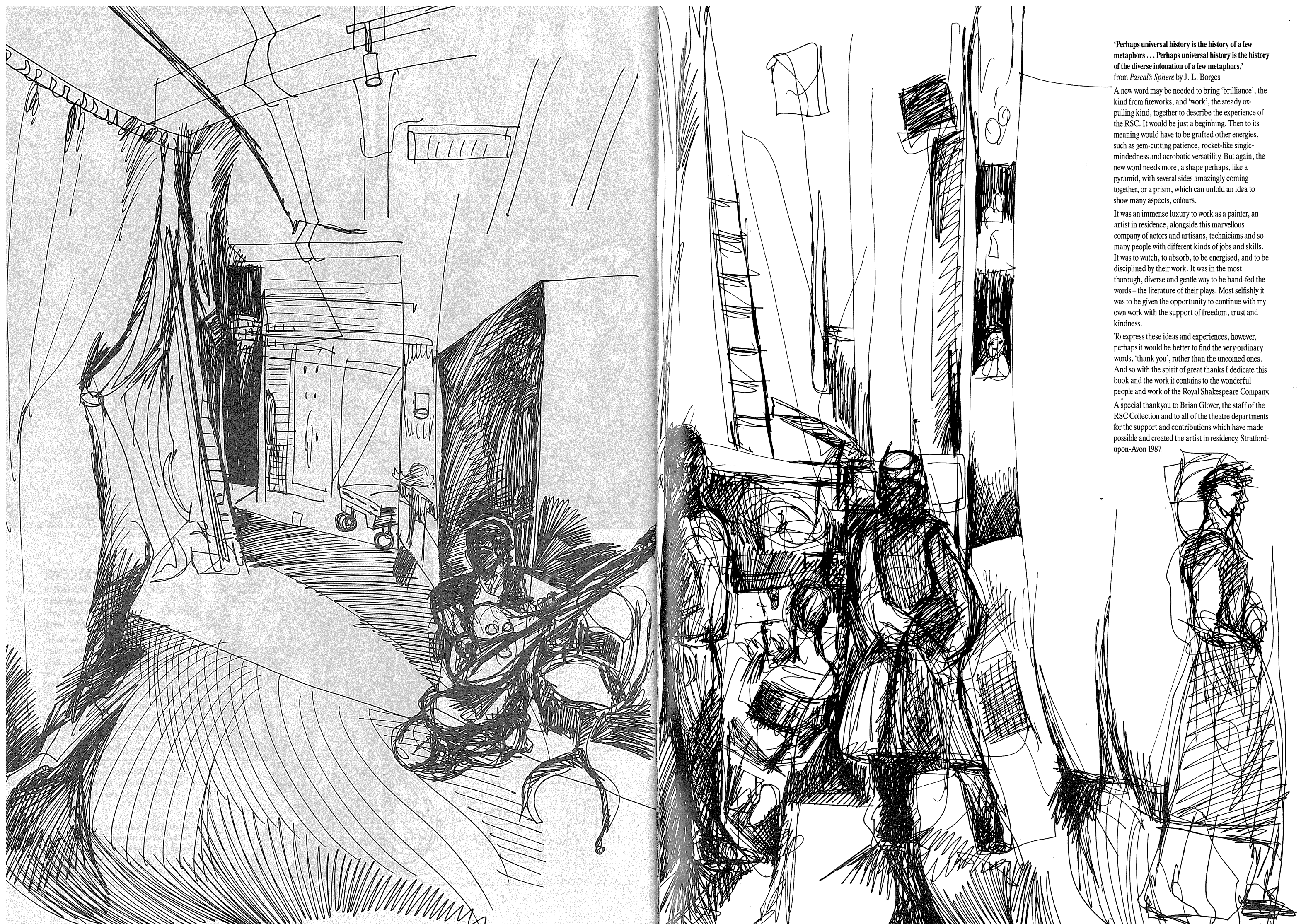
Twelfth Night, Backstage and Frontstage, 60 inches × 137 inches/pen and ink on paper

TWELFTH NIGHT
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
 William Shakespeare
 director Bill Alexander
 designer Kit Surrey

The play was first viewed from backstage – doing drawings rather than fast sketching – a surprisingly relaxed, congenial atmosphere – lute practising – some talking – no major shifting of sets during this production – ‘a quiet backstage experience’, the stage manager said – actors seemed especially interested in these drawings – perhaps a special affection for backstage – one actress pointed out ‘pools of light’ – TWELFTH NIGHT – also observed from the audience/auditorium – front row, right hand side – nearly the same angle as from backstage – the two views grew into one idea for a drawing – a very large – nearly 12’, backstage and frontstage, pen and ink – a pleasure and retreat to work upon such a large piece in a single simple medium.

Antony Sher: *I have very much enjoyed Kathleen Barrett’s work, particularly her sketches and the large cartoon of TWELFTH NIGHT in which she captures perfectly the multi-layered reality (of backstage, onstage and audience) when a performance is in progress.*





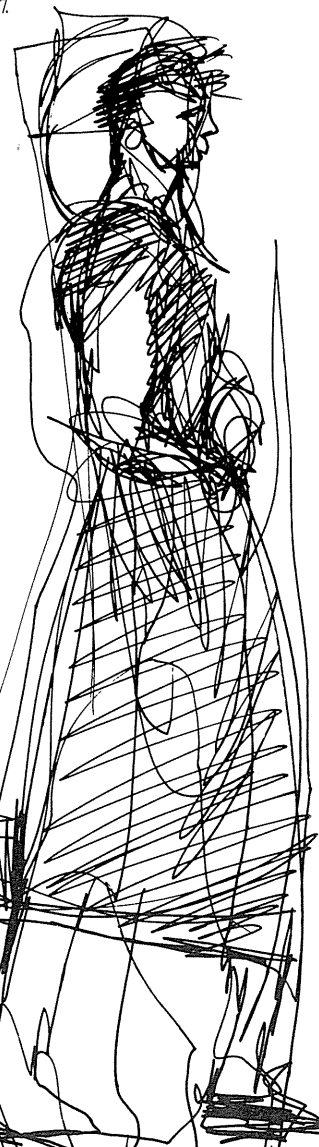
'Perhaps universal history is the history of a few metaphors ... Perhaps universal history is the history of the diverse intonation of a few metaphors,'
from *Pascal's Sphere* by J. L. Borges

A new word may be needed to bring 'brilliance', the kind from fireworks, and 'work', the steady ox-pulling kind, together to describe the experience of the RSC. It would be just a beginning. Then to its meaning would have to be grafted other energies, such as gem-cutting patience, rocket-like single-mindedness and acrobatic versatility. But again, the new word needs more, a shape perhaps, like a pyramid, with several sides amazingly coming together, or a prism, which can unfold an idea to show many aspects, colours.

It was an immense luxury to work as a painter, an artist in residence, alongside this marvellous company of actors and artisans, technicians and so many people with different kinds of jobs and skills. It was to watch, to absorb, to be energised, and to be disciplined by their work. It was in the most thorough, diverse and gentle way to be hand-fed the words – the literature of their plays. Most selfishly it was to be given the opportunity to continue with my own work with the support of freedom, trust and kindness.

To express these ideas and experiences, however, perhaps it would be better to find the very ordinary words, 'thank you', rather than the uncoined ones. And so with the spirit of great thanks I dedicate this book and the work it contains to the wonderful people and work of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

A special thank you to Brian Glover, the staff of the RSC Collection and to all of the theatre departments for the support and contributions which have made possible and created the artist in residency, Stratford-upon-Avon 1987.



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THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

SWAN THEATRE

Cyril Tourneur

director **Di Trevis**

designer **Michael Levine**

Fabulously macabre – costumes – make-up – wigs –
jewellery – stage set, red and black, with a giant,
broken, skull-encrusted table, a duvet with simulated
mould – the great wrought iron electric candlestick
system had its own technical rehearsal.

The story was of a strange dim world of forgotten/
omitted virtue – which became more and more
a horrible inferno until snapped into a theatrical
adventure upon seeing the wild twin brothers –
a sparkle in these characters seemed to be a visual
aside, as if to say, 'it is just a play'.

Jim Hooper: *It's very stimulating for the company to
see how their work can be an inspiration for an artist.*