

The Ringling College Theme Park Design Competition

Challenge: Themed Cart

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Introduction

For many young entertainment design professionals working in the themed entertainment industry, designing a Themed Cart is a typical first design opportunity.

A Themed Cart within the themed entertainment industry is typically about the size of a car; anywhere between 6' x 8' to 10' x 16'. The cart's design needs to fit within, and even enhance, the story of the physical location within the themed environment. Story includes a period of time, a sense of place and the character(s) that live within the story, and what this is all about; what we collectively call, Theme.

In addition to providing layers, story driven details and enhancing the themed environment, a Themed Cart must function with an operational purpose within the themed environment. This can include the selling of food or merchandise, providing location-based information to guests or a combination of both.

The Themed Cart must function both operationally and thematically, and, of course, look fantastic!

Please read below to learn more about the process of designing a Theme Cart, what you must deliver, and see some examples!

Are you up to the challenge?

Are YOU the next great theme park designer?

Project Conceptual Requirements - Let's THINK about this for a moment!

For this challenge, you are tasked with designing a concept for a Themed Cart with the following Operational and Thematic requirements.

Operations:

Let's start with what the cart needs to do. It doesn't matter how cool or fun your ideas are. If they don't work, they are not going to get built. What is it selling? How does the guest pay? Where does the operator stand? Do you even need a human operator? How is it lit? How is it powered, and how much power does it need? What else can you think of that might be important to consider when it comes to operating this cart? We aren't expecting you to think of everything. That comes with years of experience in designing carts, then seeing them built, then learning from how that all went.

- **Functionality and Practicality**
 - The cart needs to be selling something; merchandise, food, etc.
 - The cart needs a point of sale area/device.
 - The cart needs some storage.
 - There needs to be a spot for a cast member to stand.
 - There needs to be a marquee sign with the name of the cart.
 - Guests need to be able to access the cart from all angles (360 degrees).
 - Cart must fit in a 8' x 12' foot print
 - This cart must be able to be built in the real world, using real materials and processes

Theme:

Your task is to develop a Theme and Story for the cart. Theme inspires Story, Story reaffirms Theme.

Theme should be thought of as what the thing is about. "The magic of the movies" might be a theme. "The magical ability of this popcorn to transform your life!" Now, THAT is something a cart could be ABOUT! That popcorn MUST be out of this world!!!

Story is a vehicle to communicate that theme. The story can be set in a Sci-Fi genre, or a western, or any time and/or place. As long as it's the best conceptual choice. What if our popcorn cart is set in a Sci-Fi story about aliens that brought the most delicious popcorn to Earth? So good, you'll think you were abducted and it changed your taste buds!

What is your cart ABOUT, theme?

What is the Story of this cart?

Now, take that theme and story, and think about the operations of this cart. How can you overlay that story, set in some fun genre, on top of the functional requirements, all while keeping in mind that you're trying to sell the IDEA that this popcorn is "Out of this WORLD!"

All of this conceptual development, and often so much more, goes into a document called a Concept Treatment. You should be able to loosely recite this concept treatment, or maybe a condensed version, at any moment. You must KNOW your concept before you start to draw it!

Project Design Requirements - Let's get VISUAL!

We often start with research and reference gathering. What do you know about the site where this cart lives? Can you find photos of the location? What is out there in the world that is 'like' this cart? Other stores, rides, food trucks, etc??? Are there other carts like the one you're imagining? If so, how can yours be different? What is inspirational to you, that's relevant to this idea? Look for art or photos that capture the spirit, story, and/or theme of your Themed Cart design concept. Feel free to use AI to generate thumbnails and wild visual inspirations. AI usually only gives you what you ask for, but it can surprise you with things you might not have thought of.

Now take all of that, plus all the conceptual development you did earlier in the 'thinking' stage, and sketch some ideas for your cart. Do as many small, basic thumbnails as you can. Get all the ideas out on paper. Zero in on what works and develop a more detailed, refined perspective concept drawing of your Themed Cart design.

Once you think the perspective drawing captures the theme and story, and fulfills the functional requirements, it's time to more accurately document the design visually. Start with a Ground Plan with dimensions. Draw the cart as if you are way above it, looking down. Do not draw any perspective in this image. It should be truly orthographic. Indicate the overall width and depth of the cart and maybe the dimensions of a few key features. Double check this plan view against the perspective. Does it look like the same cart? Are all the key features drawn on both? Do they match?

The design also needs Front and Back Elevations with dimensions. Draw these in close reference to the plan view. It's best to overlay the drawings using tracing paper or use layers in a digital app to be sure all the features of the cart actually line up and are a consistent size.

Do the same for at least one Side Elevation, with dimensions.

Now make a copy of the Perspective Drawing and identify the locations of the merchandise, the point of sale, props and storage within the Themed Cart. This is a callout sheet.

Project Deliverable - Let's Put it all together and DELIVER!

The deliverable for this project is a pitch deck or slide show. Below is a basic outline for that deck and an example deck is provided. Have fun with the design of the deck. How can you let the theme and story of this cart be reflected in the layout, colors, fonts and graphics of the presentation deck? You may develop this deck in any app you like as long as the file you upload is a PDF version of that deck. Be careful, often exporting PDF's of slides shows alters the formatting or fonts.

Final Submission must be delivered in a PDF presentation with the following:

1. Project Title, Your Name, School, Grade Level
2. Concept Treatment – Four short paragraphs that explain your design concept
 - a. Paragraph 1 – Introduction. Give us a sentence or two about it.
 - b. Paragraph 2 – Theme & Story.
 - c. Paragraph 3 – Operations. Describe some key features about how this cart works.
 - d. Paragraph - Closer.
3. Inspiration / reference photos that capture the spirit, story, and theme of your Themed Cart design concept. Feel free to use AI.
4. A few sketches that explore multiple ideas
5. One final Perspective concept drawing of your Themed Cart design
6. Ground Plan with Dimensions
7. Front and Back Elevations with Dimensions
8. Side Elevations with Dimensions
9. Callout Drawing identifying the locations of the merchandise, the point of sale, props and storage within the Themed Cart
10. BONUS: Create a character for your Themed Cart, such as a fictional proprietor of the Themed Cart. Communicate this through writing and some drawings.
11. BONUS: Create some Graphic Design for your Themed Cart, such as a logo, menu, storytelling details, interactive devices, etc.



All of these deliverables serve one key purpose...Communication! You are communicating to your leadership, the marketing department, finance, operations, all the creative departments and, very importantly, a fabrication partner. The drawings, and all that thinking you captured in your concept treatment, should say as much as you can about the cart concept. Try to imagine what questions you are leaving unanswered. Pitch this to your peers who are either theme parks fans, aspiring artists and designers, your teachers, anyone that might be interested and have interesting insights. If you can gather feedback, make revisions, and even document THAT process...

...NOW you're DESIGNING!!!

Additional Requirements

- Students may work in color or black & white.
- Students may work in traditional drawing, digital 2D design apps or digital 3D modeling apps.
- Students may NOT use intellectual property ("IP") from existing parks like Universal or Disney, nor any other existing IP from any other media.
- The ideas you develop must be original.
- The design you submit must NOT have been entered in, or won previous contests or awards. (they can recycle ideas, but not the actual designs)
- The submission also must NOT have been published or distributed previously in any media
- By submission of an entry, you grant to Ringling College and any prize providers, including Universal Creative, all necessary rights to display the work in any medium for promotional purposes.
- AI may be used for early brainstorming and inspiration only.
- Perspective, Plan and Elevation views may NOT be generated using AI!

Rubric

RCAD + UC Design Competition							 
Criteria	Ratings					Pts	
Storytelling An understanding of storytelling concepts and the ability to develop a narrative and experience centered on story. The ability to translate stories into themed experiences.	20 pts Killing it!	17 pts Exceeds expectations	15 pts Meets Expectations	13 pts Below Expectations	0 pts Not Evident	20 pts	
Functionality & Practicality Consideration for the operational requirements of the proposed design. The thing must perform the desired function(s) and be feasible to build, maintain and operate.	20 pts Killing it!	17 pts Exceeds expectations	15 pts Meets Expectations	13 pts Below Expectations	0 pts Not Evident	20 pts	
Ingenuity Designs must be uniquely original and well thought out. Surprise the guest with design solutions that they don't see everyday.	20 pts Killing it!	17 pts Exceeds expectations	15 pts Meets Expectations	13 pts Below Expectations	0 pts Not Evident	20 pts	
Visual Appeal All deliverables should be pleasing to the eye, interesting to look at and clean.	20 pts Killing it!	17 pts Exceeds expectations	15 pts Meets Expectations	13 pts Below Expectations	0 pts Not Evident	20 pts	
Concept Communication Demonstrate the ability to create and communicate multiple creative concepts utilizing various visualization tools and techniques. Proficient skills in drawing, CAD drawing, ideation sketching, digital drawing, model-making, and written and verbal communication of creative concepts.	20 pts Killing it!	17 pts Exceeds expectations	15 pts Meets Expectations	13 pts Below Expectations	0 pts Not Evident	20 pts	
Total Points: 100							