

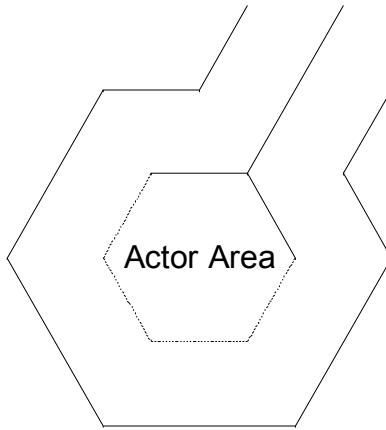
SECTION III

**DARK
ATTRACTION
DESIGN**

ROOM/EVENT CREATION

Most dark attraction builders think of them as rooms tied together. Actually the house is a series of events. Some take place in rooms and others in passageways. A room or passageway may be any size.

Page 53 is a grid for doing layouts. Page 59 shows a typical 40' x 100' house with a 20'x20' entry area.



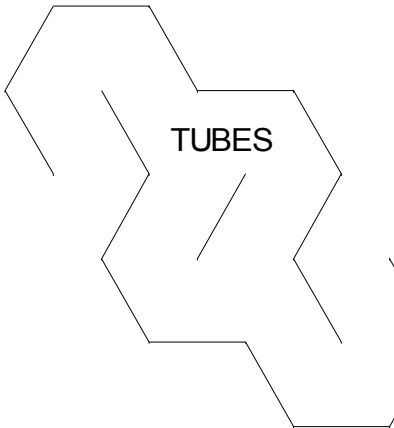
Note the natural rooms created by the 60 degree design. They come in many sizes and shapes. Don't allow a room to have a greater roof span than 16' in both directions. I.E: 16x20' is OK, 20x20' is not. As long as one dimension is no greater than 16', you should be safe. Use joist hangers and place joists 16" o.c. Use 2x4s for a non-load bearing roof and 2x6s or 2x8s for a load bearing roof.

Note the ability to change the direction the customer is traveling. Although the customer is basically going around in a circle, it is possible to loop the customer back and forth. This change of direction helps to disorient and control the customer.

When designing a room, try to create a customer path that requires the customer to spend as much time in the room as possible. Note the room to the left. The customer actually enters and exits the room in almost the same place. The design of the room forces the

customer to take the long way around the performance area.

CONTROL



The creator must exercise control over the customer. If a customer feels in control, they are not likely to become very scared. Gain control by attacking the senses. A customer will know where he or she entered the house. Disorient the customer as soon as possible. Do this with darkness, many twists & turns, sound and distractions. Give them something to worry about as soon as they enter.

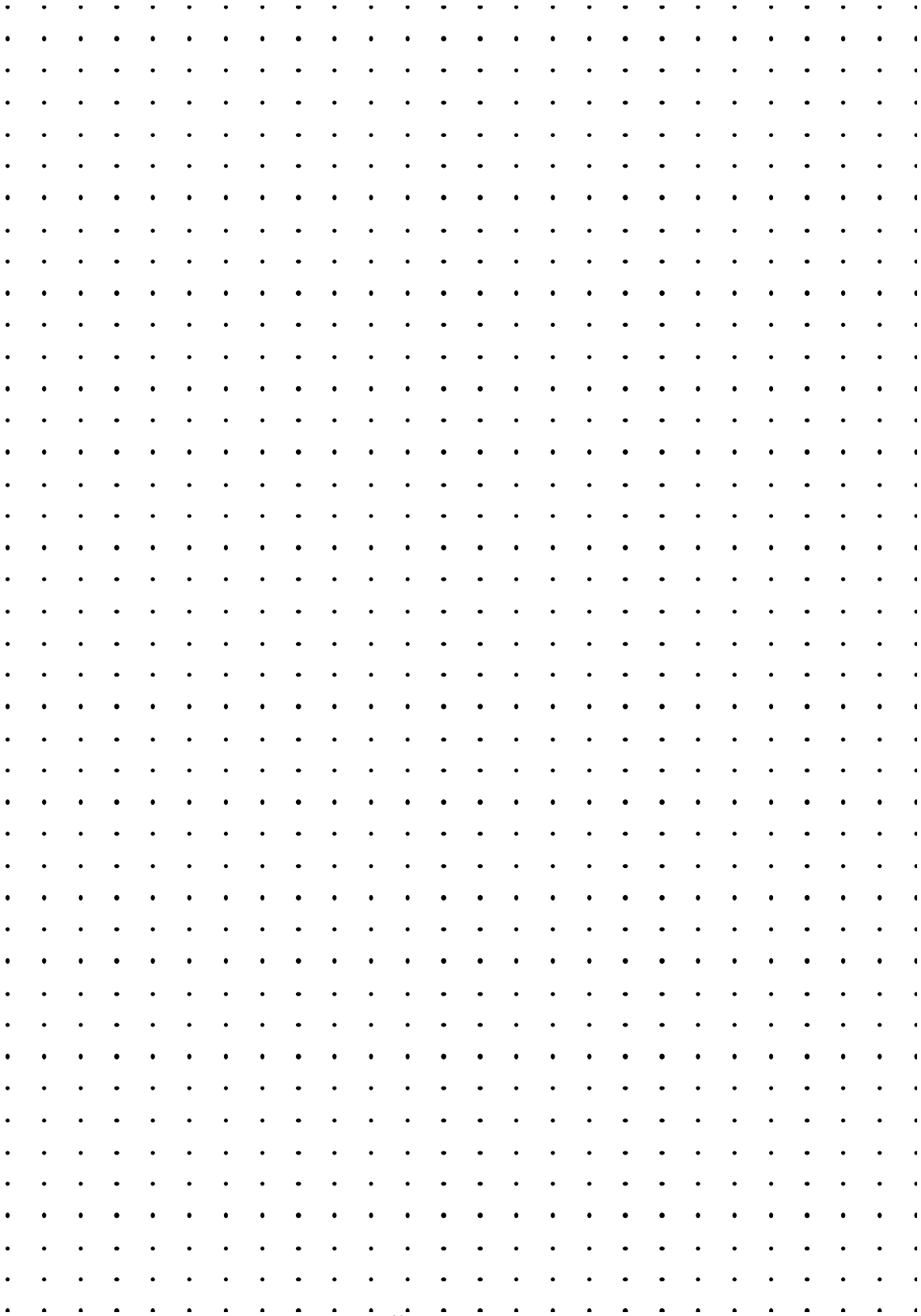
Tubes is an example of misdirection, control and getting a customer disorientated. No matter which way you enter it is possible to get turned around and exit the way you did enter. This is possible because it is dark and the room is full of 4" diameter black drain tubes of different length hanging from all the walls. It becomes a fun house as the tubes help direct/misdirect the customers.

ANTICIPATION

Is that period of time in a house when the customer has no idea what is about to happen, but sounds or partial visuals make him/her nervous and apprehensive, creating hesitation. Sometimes the best scare a customer can get is the one they give themselves or each other. I provide the atmosphere and a safe place for them to scare themselves.

A current trend in houses is to continually scare the customers from behind, pushing them out of the house to increase traffic flow and dollars earned. Some houses push their customers out in 5 to 6 minutes; hardly worth the money. I go for at least 10 minutes per customer/group and keep them in longer on slow days. After all, word of mouth is powerful advertising. One of the ways to make the house last longer is to make it bigger. A 5,000 square foot house takes at least ten minutes to get through

Another way to extend their experience is to keep the customers in each room/event longer. This slows down the traffic but also results in decreased dollars earned. To really make more money, put two or three houses in the same location. A true artist can have some fun.



60 Degree Layout

TACTICS

The same type of scare over and over loses its effectiveness quickly. Customers adapt but many still enjoy the event. However, such a house is prone to accidents and requires more actors and staff to operate smoothly.

It is important not to continuously yell at the customer. A good motion picture uses pacing to take the viewer on a roller coaster ride of visual and aural sensations. Do the same. Space out major production events.

Allow sound to work for you. Use different levels of floor and ceiling to move the customers.

Make their path through the house take many turns and changes of direction. Texture can be used. People touch things on the walls, hanging from the ceiling or props covered with slime. Make your house a motion picture that the customer moves through and reacts to.

Actors can use stillness to their advantage or nonsensical motion to confound the customer. Above all else, build anticipation. Do not telegraph to the customer what will be done to them. Use placement of speakers and sound systems to mask events from each other.

Deep in the house, after several standard ghost illusions, place an actor in a ghost illusion. Example left. Customers will not expect the ghost to come to life and attack them as they view the scene. Make it more interesting than usual, more decoration and something worthwhile to see. Be sure to back it up to the central corridor.

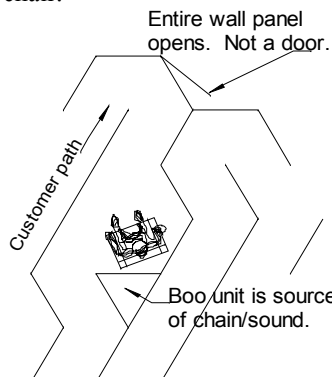
All events should have at least two scenarios: one going on for the first group of customers and one that begins as the second group is coming and the first group is leaving. This way the second group will be expecting the wrong outcome and will be surprised. Keep alternating unless it is a very slow day, then take even more time.

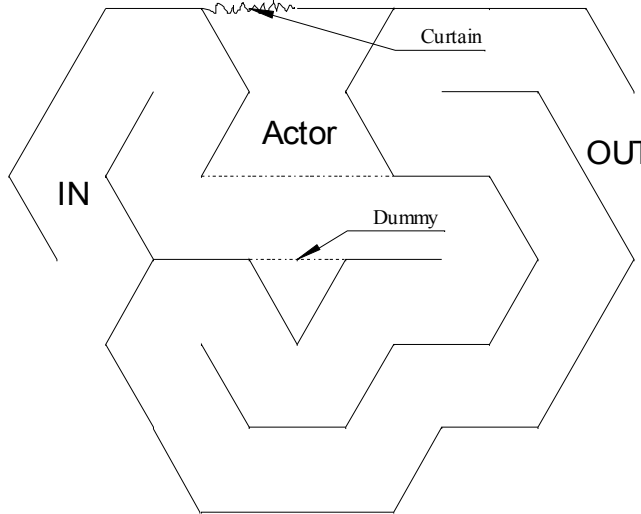
All scenarios should be scripted to be acted out quickly or slowly depending upon the crowd. Minimize the waiting time to enter your house to no more than 20 to 30 minutes.

MISDIRECTION

Is the art of creating a situation where customers are looking in one direction/place while the scare/surprise is coming from another direction. This is the mark of a good house. Keep the customer guessing. They may even walk into a room where people are acting normal, maybe doing nothing, and as they leave the room someone not in view nails them. Whatever you do, do not let the customer know what is to happen by repeating the same scare over and over or having the same creature following them.

Example: A harmless looking old man/woman is sitting in a rocking chair. No make-up, just old clothes, he/she is laughing, moaning or muttering (doesn't really make any difference as long as they are non-threatening). Behind this person in the dark is the sound of chains, so the threat must be in the shadows. The customers move forward cautiously past the old person and down the better lighted corridor. The real threat is behind them now. That turn to the right concealed a door in the shadows. The scare comes from there, usually to the last person in the group, although the creature could burst into the middle of a larger group. The old person was actually pulling a cord that rattled the chain behind him/her creating the illusion of a threat ahead or the chain control could be attached to the rocking chair.





Example: The customers must walk between an actor on the left acting strange but basically harmless. On the right is a spring loaded dummy operated by the actor. The customers will cautiously pass through the corridor, but close to the dummy. The actor will trigger the dummy to attack the bars at his discretion and with practice will create the proper situation to provide the best scare.

Misdirection creates some of the best scares. However, in a large house, continually using misdirection and or scaring from behind makes the house predictable.

CUSTOMER IMAGINATION

I have learned that anticipation is better than misdirection. The best way to scare a person is

to use their imagination as well as yours. Example: a tried and true fixture of haunted houses is the ever faithful chain saw. I try to deliver this scare, but customers leaving my house keep telling me that they heard the chain saw and never saw it. They say "did we miss it?" I say "no."

A lone cassette player with a 10 second sound effect (on a 30 second loop tape) of a chain saw starting up, cutting through a screaming person and abruptly stopping is placed in a twist of corridors. I have heard many a person refusing to go further, some taking the next exit when their friends failed to convince them to go forward. The sound effect alone created the fear. The speaker for this effect should be placed high and in a central location over several halls.

Other sound effects I use like this are simple spoken words such as "Hello", "I can see you", "Hi there good looking". I'm sure you can come up with more. The simple words work because the corridor is totally dark, the customers are moving slowly and have no idea where they are. A normal voice startles the customers who are braced for someone to yell at them. It sounds out of place and the customer has something else to worry about. Is there really someone in the corridor waiting for them?

Record all three messages on one 60 second loop tape and allow an equal amount of silence between each message. The speaker for this effect should be placed in the same corridor and just above the six foot level. If possible, conceal it in the wall and don't allow the sound to bleed over into other corridors.

OVERALL HOUSE LOOK

The outside of the house should reflect the interior theme. It should be the best looking part of the house. It should look (and probably will be) expensive. If in a building, attach the facade to the face of the building. If in a parking lot, select the most visible corner of the building area to create the entrance and ticket area.

In the art of imagination, setting the scene is 90% of the battle. A second-rate facade will generate poor traffic and create a "is this worth it?" attitude in the customer. The staff may begin to question the house quality and their ability.

The exterior of the house and the parking area should be well illuminated with bright white light. Signage should be readable from a passing car.

Decorate the outside entrance area with items that reflect the house theme. Use colored lights on the visible interior areas and have house sound playing in the waiting area. A different sound track or radio station should be playing to the outside crowd.

The ticket booth/window should be visible and the entrance well marked. A sign listing all house rules must be visible before the customer enters the actual house. This sign may be in the waiting area.

HAUNTED HOUSE SUGGESTIONS

HORROR HOSPITAL: OPERATING TABLE, LIVE AUTOPSY, MAUSOLEUM, LAB BLOOD DONATION, BODY PARTS, DENTIST CHAIR, CRAZIES BEHIND BARS, X-RAY CREATURE, SHOCK TREATMENT, CAT SCAN, ETC.

HAUNTED CASTLE: TORTURE CHAMBER, CRYPT, DUNGEON, PENDULUM, WIZARDS LAB, GUILLOTINE, THE BLOCK, IRON MAIDEN, THE RACK, GUARD ROOM, ETC.

HAUNTED HOUSE: GRAVEYARD, PULSATING FLOOR, ART GALLERY, GALLOWS, GIANT SPIDER, B&W ROOM, MAZE, ETC.

OTHER IDEAS

APPARENTLY SAFE DISPLAY MOVES ABRUPTLY
ROOM OF COLLAPSED WOODEN BEAMS TO WORK THROUGH
TRIANGULAR SPACE USED FOR DISPLAY OR SCARING
CUSTOMERS WALK OVER UNKNOWN THING(S)
HALLWAY FINISHED WITH COOL, DAMP ROCK
LARGE CAVE WITH STALAGMITE & STALACTITES
COMBO CAVERN WITH CREATURES
EYES IN THE DARK
GHOST CHANGES BEFORE YOUR EYES
ITEMS EMBEDDED IN FLOOR & ILLUMINATED
GARDEN HOSE HANGING FROM CEILING & WALLS
GHOST PROJECTED ON FOG
MANY ITEMS APPEAR TO EXIST THROUGH REFLECTION
PERSON CREATURE CHANGE PLACES OR LOOKS
SMALL ENCLOSED AREA WITH LATEX COVERED HANGING ROPES COMING OUT OF
NOWHERE THAT THE CUSTOMER MUST WALK THROUGH
WHITE CAVERN WITH A SKULL & BONES THEME
LONG BLACK FLEXIBLE DRAIN PIPES HANGING IN THE HALL

USE YOUR IMAGINATION. I HAVE SEEN HOUSES BASED ON MOTION PICTURES,
HORROR STORIES, LEGENDS, RELIGION AND REALITY.