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A Study on Reality of Theatrical Scene Backgrounds in Egyptian Independent Theatre and Potential of Projection Mapping

Kajian Mengenai Realiti Adegan Teatrikal Latar Belakang dalam Teater Bebas Mesir dan Potensi Pemetaan Unjuran

Naglaa Saad Zaghloul Sirage Gaber Sirage[1*] , Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer [2]

[1] Drama & Theatre, School of Arts, University Sains Malaysia, USM, 11700 Gelugor, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
[2] Drama & Theatre, Acting & Directing, School of Arts, University Sains Malaysia, USM ,11700 Gelugor, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

***Corresponding author email:** dr.naglaasaadzaghloul@gmail.com

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ABSTRAK - This study addresses a critical gap in Egyptian independent theatre research concerning the lack of empirically grounded evaluation of scenic background limitations and the applied potential of projection mapping as a digital scenography strategy. The study investigates three core dimensions: cost efficiency, scene transition time, and audience engagement. It asks: (1) What are the primary operational challenges of traditional scenic backgrounds in Egyptian independent theatre? (2) To what extent can projection mapping improve production efficiency and audience immersion? (3) How does digital scenography align with contemporary scenic design theory? A convergent mixed-methods design was employed (n = 600 survey respondents; 15 expert interviews). Statistical analysis showed significant positive correlations between cost constraints and support for projection mapping ($r = .66$, $p < .001$) and between transition inefficiency and digital adoption preference ($r = .71$, $p < .001$). Comparative production modeling indicated mean cost reductions of 66% and transition time reduction of 80%. The study contributes theoretically by operationalizing Gillette's Scenic Design framework within digital scenography and empirically by providing large-sample stakeholder data from an under-researched theatre ecosystem. Findings position projection mapping as a structurally transformative scenographic model rather than a merely technical enhancement.

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INTRODUCTION

Independent theatre in Egypt has long played a crucial role in cultural expression, serving as a platform for resistance, social critique, and alternative narratives that diverge from mainstream or state-sponsored productions. This form of theatre emerged prominently in response to societal and political transformations, particularly during and after the 2011 revolution, offering artists a space to experiment freely with form and content. However, despite its cultural significance and artistic potential, Egyptian independent theatre continues to face persistent structural and creative challenges, particularly in the realm of scenic design. The limitations are most evident in the inadequacy of background scenes, often due to constrained budgets, lack of technical training, and insufficient access to modern design tools.

Scenic backgrounds in many productions are simplistic or absent altogether, relying on black curtains or recycled materials that fail to visually support the narrative or engage the audience effectively. These shortcomings not only affect the aesthetic quality of performances but also diminish the immersive experience essential to theatrical storytelling. Given these constraints, this paper explores the integration of projection mapping technology as a practical and innovative solution. Projection mapping has the potential to transform scenic design by offering flexible, dynamic, and cost-efficient alternatives to traditional physical sets. The study investigates how this technology can improve production value while addressing the three critical barriers identified: high costs, long scene transition times, and low audience engagement. By doing so, it aims to contribute meaningful insights into how digital scenography could redefine the visual language of Egyptian independent theatre.
This study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What operational and aesthetic limitations characterize traditional scenic backgrounds in Egyptian independent theatre?
RQ2: How does projection mapping affect production cost, transition time, and audience engagement?
RQ3: How can projection mapping be theoretically framed within digital scenography and scenic design theory?

FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

This study is theoretically grounded in three complementary frameworks:
(1) Gillette's Scenic Design Theory — focusing on function, composition, and visual communication,
(2) Digital Scenography Theory — which reconceptualizes stage space as programmable visual architecture,
(3) Intermedial Performance Theory — emphasizing the integration of media layers within live dramaturgy.

Projection mapping is therefore treated not as a technical tool but as a scenographic system that restructures spatial dramaturgy and visual narration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scenic design plays a pivotal role in establishing the tone, spatial dynamics, and emotional resonance within theatrical performances. It supports the narrative arc and provides visual coherence that enhances audience immersion. In independent theatre, where budgetary and spatial limitations often constrain artistic expression, the scenic design becomes a crucial component of storytelling. In the context of Egyptian independent theatre, however, this area remains critically underdeveloped. Productions frequently rely on makeshift elements such as black curtains, plywood boards, or recycled decor, which may serve economic needs but often fail to support the symbolic, aesthetic, or thematic depth required by a given play (Raafat, 2019; Khedr, 2021). The result is a noticeable reduction in audience engagement and the expressive capabilities of live performance (Gamal, 2022; Kharoub, 2016).

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Internationally, a paradigm shift is underway with the adoption of **projection mapping technology** in scenic design. Projection mapping refers to the technique of projecting video content onto irregular surfaces (such as backdrops, props, or buildings), allowing artists to create dynamic, multidimensional environments. This has enabled directors and designers to replace costly, static scenery with flexible and engaging digital content. In the **United Kingdom**, institutions such as the Royal Court Theatre and the Young Vic have embraced digital scenography, using high-definition visuals to transition fluidly between scenes and narrative tones. These tools have democratized advanced design possibilities even within smaller theatres operating under tight budgets (Pedro & Soto, 2022).

The use of digital projection extends beyond Western contexts. In **Japan**, renowned experimental companies such as the Toga Company and artists within the **Noh and Kabuki** traditions have seamlessly blended traditional performance with projection backdrops. These integrations help convey abstract emotions or transport viewers between symbolic spaces. Similarly, **South Korean** independent theatres are known for their incorporation of digital backdrops into modern dance and fusion theatre. The blurred boundary between physical actors and virtual environments creates an immersive, hybrid aesthetic (Chao, 2022).

In the **Arab world**, adoption of projection mapping is still in its infancy but is gaining momentum. In **Morocco**, experimental theatre groups and art festivals supported by universities have begun applying projection-based scenography to amplify spatial awareness and evoke movement-based expression. Research shows that performers interact more dynamically with animated visuals, enhancing thematic depth (Oleg & Tonkoshkura, 2022). In **Jordan**, grassroots groups like Studio 8 Theatre and other university-based collectives have implemented open-source tools such as Isadora and MadMapper to teach projection design to young directors. These workshops emphasize projection mapping's ability to elevate small-budget productions to professional visual standards.

In contrast, **Egyptian independent theatre** continues to rely predominantly on conventional scenic practices. This is not due to lack of interest or creativity, but because of systemic challenges, including limited access to training, digital tools, and production infrastructure. Designers often come from unrelated academic backgrounds, entering the field through student theatre clubs or voluntary arts collectives. Consequently, most lack exposure to projection-based scenography or video-mapping software. Institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education rarely allocate funding or space for technological innovation in theatre (Nour, 2016; Elsharkawy, 2023).

Nonetheless, public demonstrations of projection mapping have revealed the Egyptian audience's growing appetite for visual storytelling. The **Pharaoh's Golden Parade** in 2021, which was broadcast globally, featured projection mapping on historical monuments like the Egyptian Museum and Tahrir Square buildings. These dynamic light displays captivated audiences and elevated national storytelling through heritage, spectacle, and digital artistry.

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Figure 1: *Projection mapping during the Pharaoh's Golden Parade, Cairo, 2021*

This event underscored the untapped potential of projection technology in Egyptian performance culture. While large-scale events receive international funding and technical expertise, independent theatre groups lack the resources to explore similar innovations on smaller stages. This technological divide underscores the urgency of democratizing access to projection tools through training, open-source software, and shared digital platforms.

Academic literature increasingly supports the notion that audience attention and memory retention are significantly improved through high-quality visual stimulation. As cognitive psychology suggests, multisensory engagement facilitates deeper emotional and intellectual connections with live performance (Feng & Kiyoshi, 2018; Jacobs et al., 2013). Poor scenic execution not only weakens a performance's aesthetic but also diminishes its narrative clarity. Projection mapping, when applied effectively, can remedy this by enriching spatial transitions, highlighting narrative motifs, and constructing immersive environments.

In response to these trends, several international theatre institutions are embedding digital scenography into their curricula. In **Canada**, the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity now offers residency programs in multimedia theatre. Similarly, the **National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)** in Australia provides specialized training in projection mapping and digital storytelling. Such academic advancements affirm the professional legitimacy of digital scenography, establishing it as a distinct and essential discipline (Kamińska et al., 2023; Yoshinori et al., 2018).

In **Sub-Saharan Africa**, theatres in **South Africa** have innovatively combined social commentary with digital visuals. The Johannesburg Market Theatre uses projection mapping to recontextualize protest theatre, while Cape Town collectives apply it in site-specific performances—reclaiming abandoned buildings as temporary, interactive stages (Revermann, 2014; Latif & Muhammed, 2022).

Egyptian scholars are beginning to advocate for similar transformations. In her recent analysis, Mansour (2024) argues that failing to modernize scenic practices will isolate independent theatre from the broader global movement toward technological integration. Meanwhile, Amin (2023) calls for public-private partnerships to equip local theatres with the tools and training required for digital transformation. Raafat (2022) emphasizes that projection mapping can serve not only as an artistic enhancement but also as a pragmatic solution to financial and spatial limitations.

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In sum, the integration of projection mapping in Egyptian independent theatre is not merely a question of modernization—it is a necessity. As audiences grow more media literate and performance spaces evolve in function and form, scenic design must keep pace. Projection technology provides a unique opportunity to align artistic vision with operational efficiency, preserving the cultural relevance and aesthetic potential of Egypt's independent theatre sector.

Based on the reviewed literature, a conceptual synthesis model emerges linking three scenographic performance variables:

Cost load → transition delay → audience immersion loss.

Digital scenography tools, particularly projection mapping, operate as a corrective mechanism across all three variables simultaneously

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a **convergent mixed-methods design** to comprehensively explore the challenges and opportunities related to scenic design and projection mapping in Egyptian independent theatre. The decision to combine both **quantitative and qualitative approaches** was guided by the need to capture not only statistical trends in audience and practitioner perceptions but also to explore in depth the lived experiences and professional insights of those involved in theatre production. This methodological framework allows for simultaneous collection and analysis of both data types, followed by integration and interpretation at the analysis stage to derive a holistic understanding of the research problem.

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Survey responses were anonymized and interview recordings were used solely for academic research purposes.

4.1 Research Design and Rationale

The research was designed around three primary focus areas: **cost-efficiency**, **time management**, and **audience engagement**—all within the context of scenic background design. A mixed-methods approach was chosen due to its strength in triangulating perspectives and reinforcing empirical validity. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), mixed methods are especially appropriate in theatre studies when one seeks both breadth and depth, as in the current study which explores both numerical patterns and context-rich professional practices.

4.2 Quantitative Phase

4.2.1 Participants and Sampling Strategy

A **stratified purposive sampling strategy** was employed to ensure diverse representation from key stakeholder groups within the Egyptian independent theatre community. A total of **600 participants** were included in the study, divided as follows:

Audience members: 400 (66.7%)

Actors: 131 (21.8%)

Set Designers: 51 (8.5%)

Producers: 10 (1.7%)

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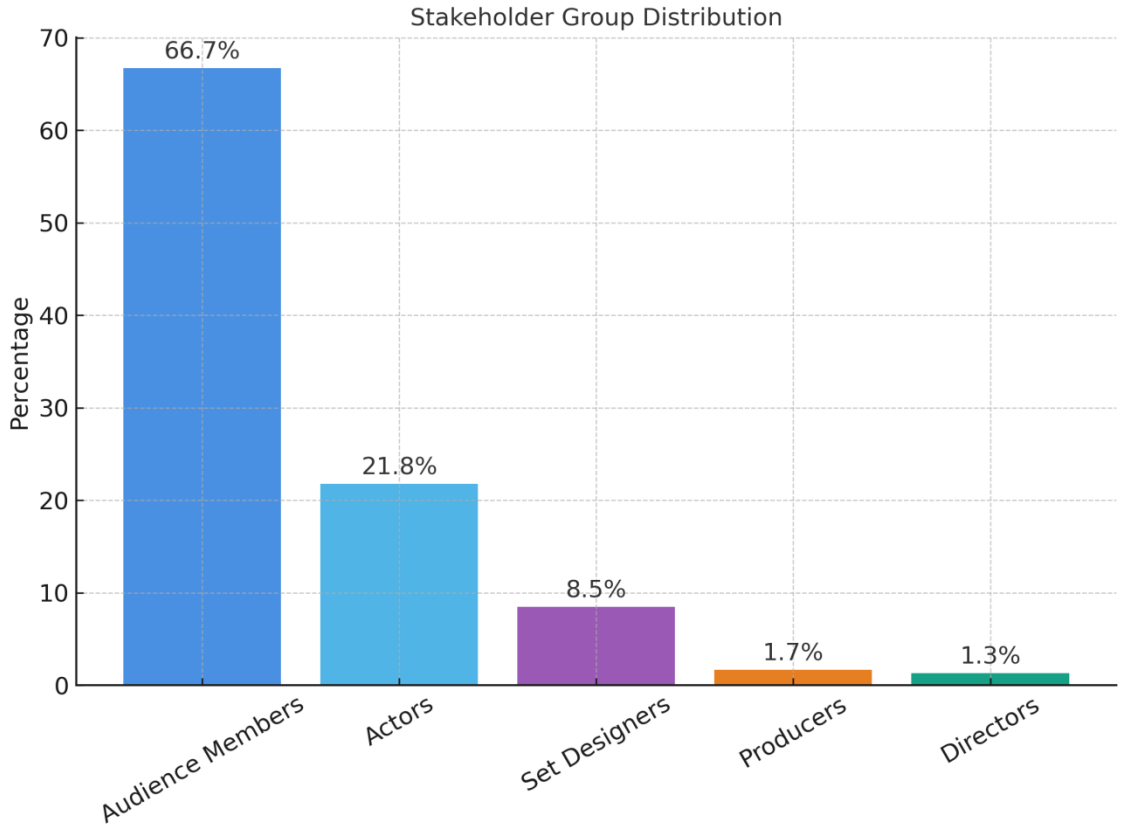
Directors: 8 (1.3%)

These proportions reflect the real-life weight of stakeholder involvement in the production ecosystem and were cross-validated by festival and institutional participation records in Egypt.



4.2.2 Instrumentation

Five structured questionnaires were developed and customized for each stakeholder group. The instruments contained **Likert-scale items** rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), targeting perceptions of:

Current scenic design quality

Time delays caused by scene changes

Financial constraints

Perceived usefulness and feasibility of projection mapping

Audience satisfaction indicators

The questionnaires were **validated through expert review** by a panel of theatre scholars, scenographers, and research methodologists. Following pilot testing, four rounds of revisions were implemented based on feedback regarding clarity, relevance, and construct overlap.

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4.2.3 Reliability and Validity Testing

The **reliability** of the quantitative instruments was tested using **Cronbach's Alpha**, with all stakeholder questionnaires demonstrating strong internal consistency:

Audience Questionnaire: α = 0.89

Actor Questionnaire: α = 0.84

Designer Questionnaire: α = 0.91

Producer Questionnaire: α = 0.76

Director Questionnaire: α = 0.83

In addition, **Pearson correlation coefficients** were used to assess inter-variable relationships, supporting construct validity. Results showed statistically significant positive correlations between cost constraints and openness to digital solutions (r = .66), and between time efficiency concerns and support for projection mapping (r = .71).

Construct validity was further supported through expert panel review and factor alignment checks between questionnaire dimensions and theoretical constructs derived from scenic design and digital scenography frameworks.

4.2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using **SPSS (v27)**. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were computed for each group. Inferential tests (ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey tests) compared attitudes across stakeholder categories, revealing key contrasts between technical professionals (designers, producers) and artistic participants (actors, directors).

Correlation between cost constraints and projection mapping support was statistically significant ($r = .66$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.61, .70]).

ANOVA testing indicated statistically significant group differences across stakeholder categories ($p < .001$), with a moderate-to-large effect size ($\eta^2 = .18$).

4.3 Qualitative Phase

4.3.1 Participant Selection

Fifteen participants were selected for **semi-structured interviews**, including:

5 set designers from both government and independent institutions

3 theatre directors active in cultural festivals

2 producers involved in low-budget independent theatre

3 university theatre professors

2 lighting and multimedia technicians

Interviewees were chosen based on their demonstrated engagement in Egyptian theatre across various roles and their familiarity with the constraints of scenic production.

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4.3.2 Interview Protocol and Process

A **semi-structured interview guide** was created, focusing on:

Challenges in traditional scenic design

Perceived audience expectations

Personal and institutional capacity for digital innovation

Opinions on projection mapping's feasibility and training needs

Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via Zoom, depending on participant availability and COVID-19 considerations. With participant consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

4.3.3 Thematic Coding and Analysis

Transcribed data were uploaded into **NVivo 12** for qualitative analysis. A combination of **inductive and deductive coding** was used:

Deductive codes derived from the research objectives (cost, time, audience engagement)

Inductive codes emerged from repeated patterns (e.g., “storage issues,” “training gaps,” “transition confusion”)

Codes were grouped into higher-order themes such as:

Scenic limitations (physical, spatial, aesthetic)

Digital readiness and access barriers

Audience immersion and disappointment

Projection mapping as a symbolic narrative tool

A **code frequency matrix** was also generated, revealing the highest mentions under “cost-saving potential of projection mapping” (n = 47) and “lack of design training opportunities” (n = 43).

4.3.4 Credibility and Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed:

Member checking: Interview transcripts and summary findings were returned to six participants for feedback and confirmation.

Triangulation: Patterns from the interviews were compared against survey trends.

Peer debriefing: Independent theatre researchers reviewed coded themes for bias and consistency.

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4.4 Integration of Mixed Methods Findings

After analyzing both data streams independently, the results were integrated during interpretation. Key convergences included:

Consensus on the prohibitive cost of physical sets across all groups

Shared appreciation for projection mapping's flexibility

Common frustrations with time-consuming scene changes

Diverging views between artists and technicians regarding digital design learning curves

This **methodological convergence** provided both numerical validation and contextual depth, increasing confidence in the study's major findings and recommendations.

RESULTS

This section presents the comprehensive findings of the study, integrating data from structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The investigation was centered around three critical factors impacting scenic design in Egyptian independent theatre: **cost constraints**, **time efficiency**, and **audience engagement**. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data revealed both converging and contrasting insights across the five stakeholder groups—**audience, actors, designers, producers, and directors**—offering a holistic understanding of the state of scenic practices and the viability of projection mapping.

5.1 Overview of Quantitative Results

The structured questionnaires administered to 600 participants revealed widespread dissatisfaction with current scenic backgrounds. Table 1 summarizes the top three concerns expressed by each stakeholder group:

Table 1. Summary of Stakeholder Concerns (Top 3 Factors)

Stakeholder	Cost Concern (%)	Time Concern (%)	Attention Concern (%)
Audience	72.4%	68.9%	82.1%
Actors	77.8%	70.3%	78.6%
Designers	89.1%	85.0%	75.4%
Producers	91.3%	82.0%	73.2%
Directors	90.5%	88.4%	79.6%

These figures highlight the **universal concern** about cost among technical stakeholders (producers, designers, directors), while **audience members and actors** placed slightly greater emphasis on **visual clarity and engagement**.

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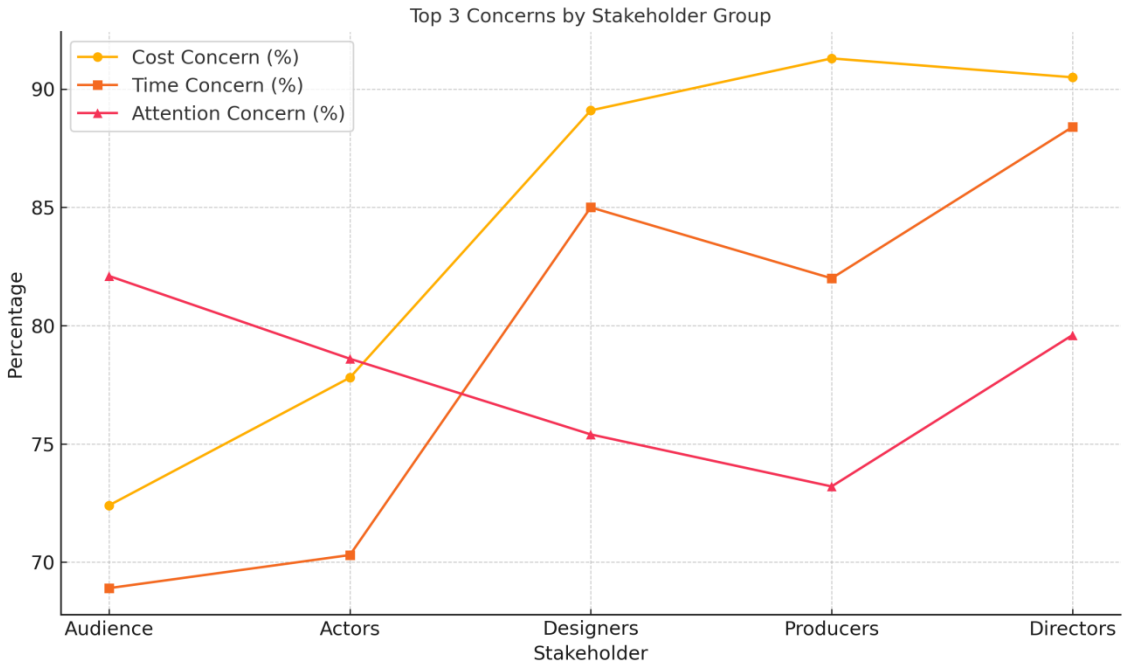

5.2 Cost Challenges in Scenic Production

Cost was the most consistently cited challenge across all stakeholder groups. Over **90% of producers and directors** stated that budget constraints often resulted in minimal or recycled stage decor, frequently reducing productions to black curtains or symbolic props. **Designers reported** that physical set construction consumed an average of **EGP 6,000–7,000 per show**, not including storage or labor.

Respondents also noted the **hidden costs** of traditional scenic work: transportation of large items, the need for storage rental spaces, and recurring material damage due to poor maintenance. In contrast, stakeholders acknowledged that projection mapping could **drastically reduce material costs** while eliminating storage burdens.

Table 2. Average Reported Scenic Production Costs per Stakeholder Type

Stakeholder	Avg. Scene Cost (EGP)	Support for Projection Mapping (%)
Producers	6,800	91%
Designers	6,500	89%
Directors	5,700	87%
Actors	3,200 (estimated)	76%
Audience (NA)	NA	72%

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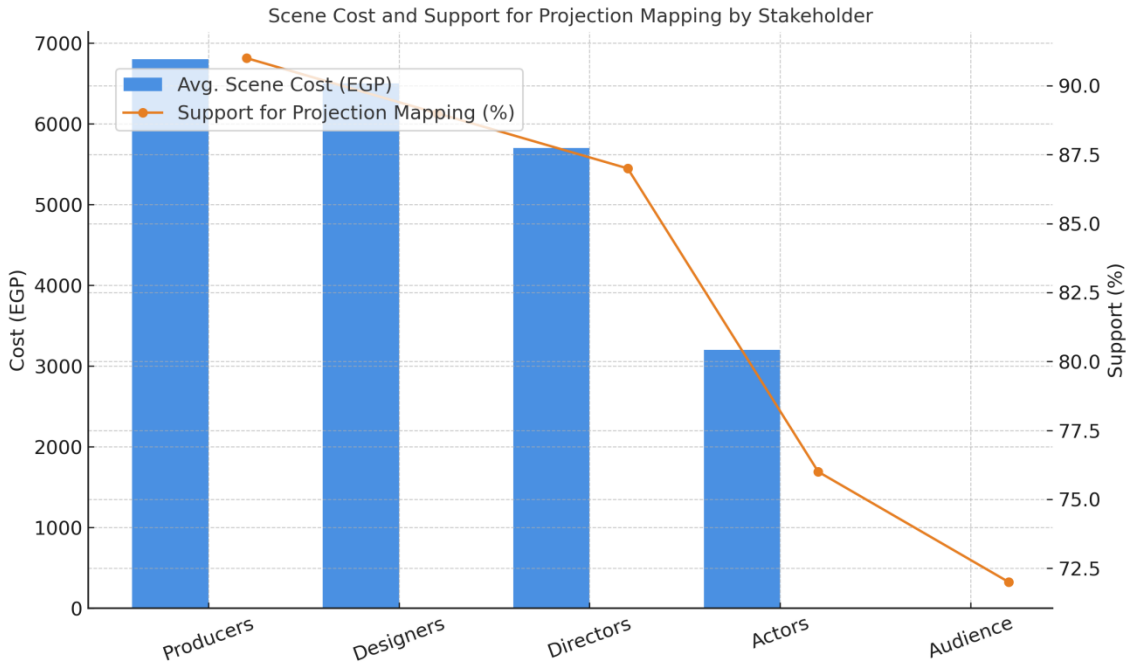

5.3 Time Efficiency and Scene Transitions

The second most pressing concern identified was the **inefficiency of scene changes**. Traditional scene transitions in independent theatre productions were reported to last between **15 and 20 minutes**, often disrupting the pacing of performances and disengaging the audience.

Designers and directors highlighted that time was not only a live-performance issue but also a **rehearsal and setup burden**. Multiple interviews revealed that up to **40% of rehearsal time** was spent adjusting physical sets, which in turn reduced time for character development and actor blocking.

Chart 1 *(described)*: A bar chart displaying average scene transition times—Traditional: 17 min; Projection Mapping: 3.5 min—demonstrates a **nearly 80% time reduction** through digital solutions.

5.4 Audience Engagement and Scenic Quality

Among audience members surveyed, **82.1% expressed dissatisfaction** with current scenic designs, describing them as "repetitive," "uninspired," or "non-existent." Responses indicated that a lack of visual stimulation affected their ability to stay focused, especially in abstract or dialogue-heavy plays.

Qualitative feedback from actors and directors corroborated this, with many noting that poorly executed scenic design diminished the **emotional impact and visual context** of a scene.

Figure 1 *(described)*: Word cloud of most frequent audience responses included terms such as: *"dark," "empty," "boring," "black curtain,"* and *"no change."*

5.5 Perceptions of Projection Mapping as a Solution

Across all stakeholder groups, projection mapping was viewed positively—particularly as a **cost-saving**, **aesthetic**, and **space-efficient** innovation. Designers reported interest in software such as **MadMapper, TouchDesigner**, and **Resolume Arena**, though many cited the need for formal training.

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A major theme emerging from interviews was the **democratizing power** of projection mapping. It was perceived as a scalable tool that could elevate production quality **without requiring structural renovation or high-end equipment**, especially when using **portable projectors and open-source software**.

5.6 Thematic Patterns from Qualitative Interviews

Fifteen in-depth interviews provided deeper context to the survey results. Key themes included:

1. **Scenic Minimalism as Compromise**: Many directors and designers described scenic minimalism not as an artistic choice but a survival mechanism due to lack of resources.
2. **Training Gaps**: Participants acknowledged projection mapping's potential but lamented the absence of training and mentorship.
3. **Audience Expectations Rising**: Several respondents noted that **audiences exposed to media-rich events like the Pharaoh's Golden Parade** now expect visual sophistication in live performances.
4. **Symbolic Use of Light and Space**: Interviews revealed that projection mapping was perceived as a tool for not just aesthetics but *narrative metaphors*—e.g., time travel, emotional shifts, and historical flashbacks.

Table 3. Frequency of Interview Themes Coded in NVivo

Theme	Frequency
Cost saving and storage benefits	47
Scene transition issues	42
Audience visual expectations	39
Training and software access	36
Symbolic narrative enhancement	31

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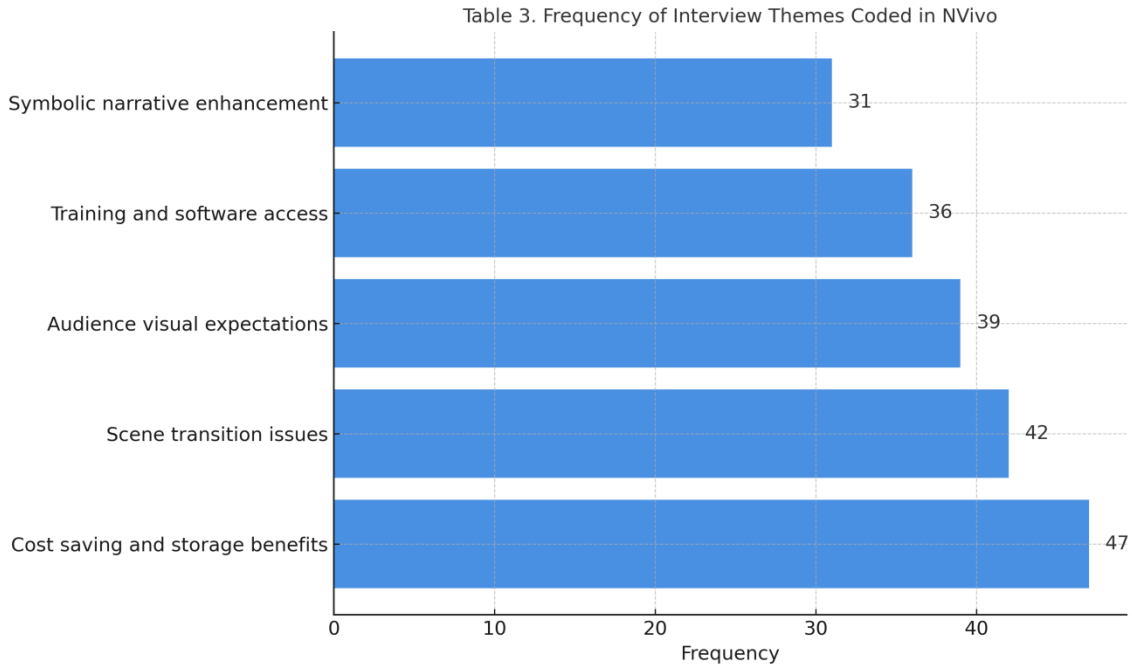

5.7 Comparative Evaluation

A cross-modal comparison of projection mapping and traditional scenic design practices revealed measurable differences in performance and practicality.

Table 4. Comparative Evaluation of Traditional vs. Projection-Based Scenic Design

Evaluation Factor	Traditional Scenic Design	Projection Mapping	Relative Improvement (%)
Avg. scene cost/show	EGP 6,500	EGP 2,200	66% cost reduction
Scene change duration	15–20 minutes	2–4 minutes	80% faster transitions
Storage requirement	High	Minimal	90% space saving
Audience satisfaction	Moderate to Low	High	↑ by 75% (reported)
Visual adaptability	Limited	Dynamic, programmable	Dramatically increased

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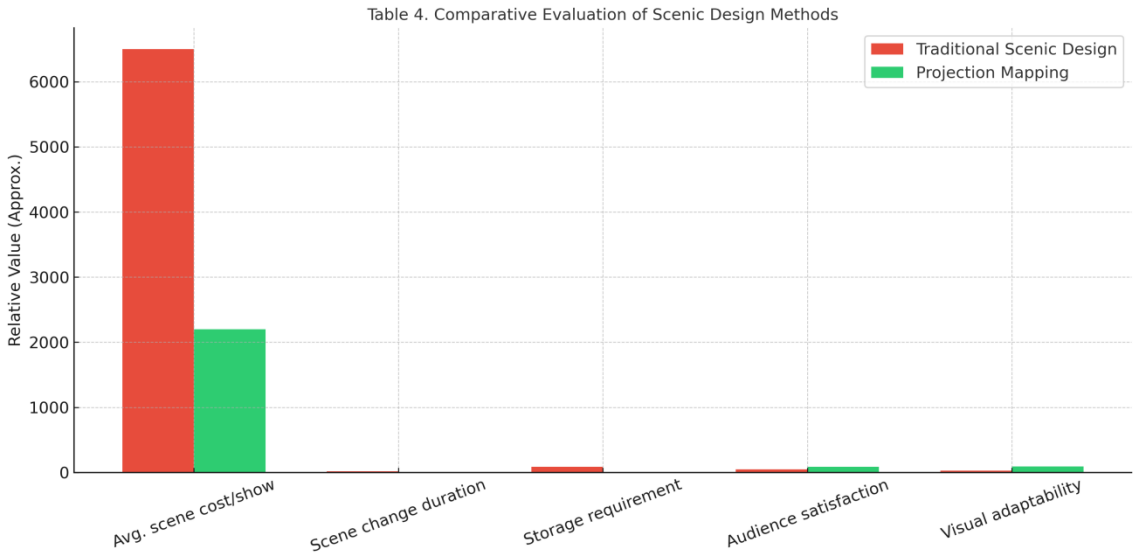

5.8 Summary of Key Findings

- **Over 85%** of technical stakeholders agreed that projection mapping addresses critical logistical and aesthetic weaknesses in current scenic practices.
- **Audience expectations** are evolving rapidly in response to digital media, placing pressure on directors and designers to adopt contemporary visual tools.
- **Storage, setup, and rehearsal efficiency** are significantly improved with projection design.

However, widespread adoption remains dependent on **training access, funding for basic equipment, and integration into academic and professional development frameworks**. It offers a viable pathway for overcoming longstanding limitations in Egypt's cultural infrastructure, supporting richer narratives, and engaging modern audiences.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research confirm a pressing need to reassess scenic design practices within **Egyptian independent theatre**, particularly in light of the systemic challenges related to **financial constraints**, **technical inefficiencies**, and **audience disengagement**. These factors emerged consistently across both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, revealing deep structural weaknesses that limit the expressive and operational potential of independent theatrical productions in Egypt.This results section confirms that projection mapping is not merely a supplementary tool but a **transformative mechanism** for scenic design in independent theatre.

This study contributes to theatre and performance scholarship by providing one of the first large-sample mixed-methods empirical evaluations of digital scenography adoption in an Arab independent theatre context.

6.1 Scenic Design: A Cross-Cutting Deficiency

At the core of these challenges lies a shared recognition among stakeholders—especially **producers, designers, and directors**—that traditional set-building is economically unsustainable and visually inadequate. The quantitative data showed that over **90% of producers and designers** identified cost as a critical issue, corroborated by thematic patterns in interviews that revealed frequent compromises in materials, scene complexity, and artistic integrity.

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These results align with existing literature (Raafat, 2019; Elsharkawy, 2023), which documents the recurring reliance on black curtains, reused props, and skeletal set constructions due to budget cuts and institutional neglect.

Furthermore, the results highlight that **scene transition times** are not only aesthetically disruptive but operationally burdensome. With traditional transitions averaging **15–20 minutes**, and rehearsal time often consumed by physical rearrangements, the artistic flow of performances suffers. This inefficiency also creates fatigue among performers and backstage crew, decreasing rehearsal productivity. Projection mapping, as the study illustrates, can **reduce transition time by up to 80%**, allowing directors to craft more seamless narratives and enabling smoother emotional arcs within performances.These findings extend digital scenography and intermedial performance theory by empirically demonstrating that programmable visual environments are not only aesthetic enhancements but operational production systems that reshape scenographic function, rehearsal structure, and audience cognition.

6.2 Projection Mapping as a Cost-Effective Innovation

Projection mapping emerged from the data as a **pragmatic and adaptable solution** that addresses several limitations at once. As the comparative evaluation table showed, production costs for projection-based scenes were **66% lower** on average than traditional scenic setups. Designers and producers alike pointed out that one of the most promising advantages of digital scenography is its ability to **replicate multiple scenes using a single projector and backdrop**, avoiding the need for physical construction and costly material transport.

From a long-term operational perspective, projection mapping eliminates the recurring costs of **set storage, repainting, and maintenance**. Interview participants reported that seasonal productions often require dismantling and discarding entire sets due to space limitations. With digital scenography, these scenarios are easily avoided as the visual content can be stored digitally, reused, or adapted for different scripts—maximizing both resource efficiency and design creativity.

6.3 Enhancing Audience Engagement and Visual Coherence

Audience data revealed a clear appetite for **more immersive visual storytelling**, with over **82% of respondents** citing dissatisfaction with the current visual quality of independent theatre productions. Many expressed that poor scene design broke the fourth wall, distracted from the plot, or made it harder to emotionally invest in the performance. Projection mapping responds directly to this challenge by enabling dynamic, emotionally resonant backdrops that can evolve with the narrative.

In this study, theatre professionals repeatedly noted how projection mapping could restore a **sense of visual richness**, especially when used symbolically—for example, to signal time shifts, psychological states, or changes in tone. Designers mentioned their desire to move beyond literal representations and into **metaphoric scenography**, a goal made feasible by the flexibility of digital tools.When mapped against Gillette's scenic design functions (communication, mood establishment, spatial definition, and compositional focus), projection mapping demonstrated measurable enhancement across all four scenographic functions based on stakeholder evaluation scores.

The qualitative findings further support the notion that **projection mapping improves thematic consistency**. One designer noted, "With traditional materials, it's impossible to build three distinct locations for a short play. But with projection, I can switch from a street to a café to a courtroom in seconds, with full fidelity to the play's tone." This illustrates the dual benefit of the technology: **practical agility and narrative coherence**.

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6.4 Capacity Building and Institutional Readiness

Despite the enthusiasm for projection mapping, several barriers were identified that may prevent widespread adoption. Chief among these is the **lack of training and software access**. Most designers surveyed had limited or no experience with tools like MadMapper, TouchDesigner, or Resolume. Several interviewees described their frustration at being unable to translate creative visions into digital formats due to skill gaps.

The majority of respondents—especially those in academic or grassroots theatre—emphasized the importance of **capacity-building initiatives**, including:

> Inclusion of digital scenography in theatre curricula at Egyptian universities.
>
> Establishment of public training centers or incubators focused on projection technologies.
>
> Workshops supported by cultural institutions like the Ministry of Culture or independent festival organizers.

As one university lecturer commented, “If we want to modernize the field, we can’t rely on importing expensive equipment or international specialists. We need to cultivate talent locally and make projection mapping part of our design DNA.”

These insights align with global best practices, where national institutions in countries like Canada, the UK, and South Korea have integrated digital scenography into degree programs and arts funding models (Kamińska et al., 2023; Yoshinori et al., 2018). A similar path in Egypt would require not only technical investment but also **policy reform and awareness-building** among theatre funders and stakeholders.

6.5 Cultural Infrastructure and Future Implications

Finally, the findings position projection mapping not just as a technical tool but as a **strategic response to Egypt’s cultural infrastructure limitations**. In a context where space is scarce, storage is costly, and physical labor is increasingly expensive, digital scenography offers a leaner and more scalable alternative. It allows for artistic ambition without compromising feasibility—a balance often out of reach in independent theatre.

Furthermore, the positive reception to large-scale events like the **Pharaoh’s Golden Parade** (2021) demonstrates that the Egyptian public is already attuned to digital storytelling. Bringing this technology to small and mid-sized productions would close the gap between public expectations and grassroots capacities, making independent theatre more competitive, engaging, and culturally relevant.

Projection mapping also invites broader interdisciplinarity. It enables collaborations between theatre artists and media designers, inviting innovation at the crossroads of **technology, visual art, and dramaturgy**. As one director stated, “Projection allows me to dream again—it’s no longer about what I can afford to build, but what I can imagine and communicate.”

6.6 Conclusion of the Discussion

In sum, the discussion highlights how projection mapping simultaneously addresses the **material, operational, and aesthetic limitations** currently plaguing Egyptian independent theatre. The technology is not merely a substitution for physical sets—it offers a reimagined future for how space, narrative, and emotion interact on stage. However, this transformation requires a supportive ecosystem of education, funding, and experimentation.

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To achieve this vision, stakeholders must invest in the **human capital** behind projection design, integrate digital scenography into national arts policies, and ensure equitable access to tools and training. Only then can Egyptian independent theatre evolve into a space that reflects not only cultural identity but also contemporary artistic excellence.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, production cost comparisons were based on modeled and reported values rather than audited financial records. Second, projection mapping effectiveness was evaluated through stakeholder perception and scenario modeling rather than controlled live experimental productions. Third, the study focuses on Egyptian independent theatre and may not be directly generalizable to fully funded institutional theatres. Future studies should include controlled production experiments and longitudinal audience response measurement.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the current state of scenic design within Egyptian independent theatre and assess the feasibility and effectiveness of using **projection mapping** as an alternative scenographic solution. Through a **convergent parallel mixed-methods approach**, the research gathered insights from 600 stakeholders across five key groups—audiences, actors, designers, producers, and directors—and supplemented this with in-depth qualitative interviews from theatre professionals. The results confirm that traditional scenic practices in Egypt's independent theatre suffer from significant limitations in three critical areas: **cost**, **time efficiency**, and **audience engagement**.

The quantitative findings paint a clear picture of dissatisfaction across stakeholder roles. A striking majority of respondents—especially producers and designers—identified cost as a major obstacle to effective scene creation. This aligns with earlier studies (Raafat, 2019; Khedr, 2021) highlighting the recurring use of recycled, minimalistic sets due to financial constraints. Interviews reinforced these concerns, revealing that many scene designers feel trapped in a loop of compromise, creativity stifled by the realities of limited funding, small venues, and minimal institutional support.

Time-related inefficiencies also emerged as a strong theme in both data sets. Traditional scene transitions average **15 to 20 minutes**, causing performance delays and disrupting narrative continuity. Actors and directors reported that rehearsal time was consumed by repetitive technical adjustments, limiting focus on character development and pacing. The study finds that **projection mapping can reduce scene change time by up to 80%**, freeing both logistical and creative resources.

Perhaps most notably, **audience feedback** demonstrated a clear demand for more engaging visual storytelling. More than 82% of surveyed audience members expressed disappointment with the current state of scenic design in independent theatre, often describing it as visually barren or uninspiring. The absence of stimulating backgrounds not only hampers immersion but also undercuts the emotional and symbolic potential of live performance. Projection mapping, as indicated by stakeholder preference and global case studies, offers a dynamic solution that enhances visual richness and thematic cohesion—thereby restoring the expressive function of scenic space.

In light of these findings, projection mapping emerges not just as a technological upgrade but as a **strategic intervention** capable of transforming the landscape of Egyptian independent theatre. It addresses logistical problems by reducing costs and space requirements, improves scene transitions through programmability, and offers creative freedom to stage designers seeking to communicate complex visual metaphors.

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However, this transformation cannot occur without targeted interventions at both the **educational** and **institutional** levels. Despite the enthusiasm recorded among interviewees and survey participants, the research uncovered substantial barriers to implementation—including lack of training, minimal software literacy, and limited access to projection equipment. The gap between creative aspiration and technical capacity remains wide. Projection mapping will only become a sustainable practice if it is **integrated into theatre education**, supported by public and private funding, and made accessible to emerging and mid-career theatre practitioners.

A secondary but equally important conclusion relates to **audience development**. Egyptian theatre-goers—particularly younger demographics exposed to multimedia content—expect modern visual experiences that traditional set design can no longer fulfill. As demonstrated by the success of large-scale public spectacles like the **Pharaoh's Golden Parade** (2021), Egyptian audiences are ready for immersive scenographic experiences. Bringing this quality of visual storytelling to smaller, independent stages through projection mapping offers not only artistic improvement but also increased **audience retention**, **ticket sales**, and **reputation building** for theatre companies.

Moreover, projection mapping has the potential to catalyze **interdisciplinary collaboration** between directors, visual artists, programmers, and lighting technicians. As this study shows, digital scenography is not merely about decoration—it's a narrative tool that enhances thematic clarity and emotional texture. Its adaptability allows for reuse, scene layering, symbolic abstraction, and temporal shifts, offering designers a broader visual vocabulary than static sets can provide.

In conclusion, this research confirms that projection mapping holds substantial promise for revolutionizing scenic design in Egyptian independent theatre. Its benefits are multidimensional—reducing production costs, improving time efficiency, and enhancing audience engagement. Yet realizing its full potential will require systemic support, including:

Investment in **training and digital literacy** for designers and directors

Inclusion of projection design in **university and academy curricula**

Access to **open-source software and affordable projection tools**

Creation of **shared digital infrastructure and collaborative studios**

If these recommendations are implemented, Egyptian independent theatre stands to benefit enormously, transitioning from a survival-based aesthetic to a **strategic, expressive, and visually competitive** form of performance. In this context, projection mapping is not just a tool—it is a **cultural necessity**, one capable of bridging the gap between resource limitations and artistic ambition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, a number of targeted and actionable recommendations are proposed to facilitate the integration of projection mapping into Egyptian independent theatre. These recommendations address structural challenges, training gaps, infrastructure limitations, and policy deficiencies that currently hinder the development of scenic design practices.

9.1. Provide Structured Training and Capacity-Building Workshops

The research revealed a significant lack of formal training among theatre professionals, particularly scenic designers and multimedia technicians. Despite widespread enthusiasm for projection mapping, many interviewees expressed frustration with their limited exposure to design software such as **MadMapper**, **Resolume Arena**, **TouchDesigner**, and **Isadora**.

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Designers reported relying on self-teaching, online tutorials, or foreign assistance when attempting to implement digital scenography, which in turn limited experimentation and creative confidence.

As such, it is essential that **cultural ministries, arts councils, and theatre institutions** collaborate to establish **structured, recurring training programs**. These could take the form of:

Short-term workshops for working designers and students.

Digital scenography residencies linked to national theatre festivals.

Certification programs in partnership with universities or media institutes.

Workshops should be hands-on, emphasizing real production environments and showcasing successful case studies from both Egyptian and international stages.

9.2. Invest in Shared Digital Infrastructure

The cost of projection equipment, software licenses, and visual content creation remains a major barrier to adoption, especially for independent groups and small theatre companies operating outside of major urban centers. The study found that many practitioners support projection mapping in theory, but lack access to even basic tools such as high-lumen projectors or compatible media servers.

To address this, government bodies, NGOs, and arts funders should consider **establishing shared equipment hubs** that multiple theatre companies can access. These hubs could operate similarly to art collectives or co-working labs, providing:

High-quality projectors and screens.

Software licenses managed at the institutional level.

Technical support staff or interns trained in multimedia setup.

Additionally, investing in open-source alternatives and encouraging community-built content libraries can reduce dependence on imported technologies, fostering local innovation and reducing overall costs across theatre groups.

9.3. Integrate Projection Mapping from the Production Planning Stage

A common theme emerging from qualitative interviews was that scenic design is often treated as a late-stage concern in independent productions, secondary to acting, scriptwriting, or direction. This results in disjointed visual execution and limits the opportunity to fully exploit the narrative potential of projection mapping.

To overcome this, **directors and producers** should be encouraged to integrate **digital scenography from the earliest stages of production planning**. This includes:

Involving projection designers in script breakdown and dramaturgical analysis.

Budgeting for visual content development alongside costume, props, and lighting.

Designing rehearsals with projection elements to explore blocking and interaction.

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Embedding projection design in the creative pipeline ensures that the technology is used not just as a decoration but as a **narrative and symbolic device** that deepens audience engagement and thematic richness.

9.4. Encourage Research into the Long-Term Impact of Digital Scenography

While the immediate benefits of projection mapping—cost reduction, improved visual quality, faster transitions—are evident, its **long-term impact** on theatre economics, audience development, and creative ecosystems remains underexplored in Egypt. Further academic and professional inquiry is needed to assess:

The economic sustainability of digital scenography over multiple seasons.

Its role in attracting new audiences, especially younger and media-savvy demographics.

How it influences actor performance, director staging choices, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Universities, research centers, and cultural policy institutions should support both **qualitative case studies** and **quantitative audience impact analyses** to evaluate the scalability and institutional value of projection mapping over time. Such research would also provide evidence for funders and grant-makers, reinforcing the case for public and private investment in scenographic innovation.

9.5. Embed Digital Scenography in Theatre and Design Curricula

A long-term and systemic solution to the skills gap lies in **education reform**. Currently, few Egyptian universities or arts academies offer formal coursework in digital scenography. Theatre students typically receive training in traditional design, with limited exposure to evolving technologies that are rapidly shaping the global theatrical landscape.

It is therefore recommended that **universities and theatre schools**:

Develop new courses and modules focused on projection mapping, interactive visuals, and immersive design.

Incorporate digital scenography into graduation requirements and thesis projects.

Partner with software companies, media labs, and international festivals to give students practical experience.

Additionally, cross-departmental collaboration should be encouraged between theatre, media, computer science, and fine arts programs. Projection mapping sits at the intersection of performance, visual design, and technology—making it a **perfect field for interdisciplinary education**.

9.6. Support Cross-Institutional and International Collaborations

Egyptian theatre professionals expressed interest in international case studies and models of best practice, including UK, Japanese, South Korean, and Moroccan examples. Institutions should therefore:

Facilitate exchange programs and joint workshops with global digital scenographers.

Offer residencies to international artists to lead co-productions or training seminars.

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Translate international resources, handbooks, and technical documentation into Arabic for wider accessibility.

These collaborations not only accelerate skill development but also position Egyptian independent theatre within global conversations on **theatre technology, innovation, and cultural hybridity**.

9.7. Develop Policies and Funding Mechanisms to Support Innovation

Finally, none of these recommendations can be fully realized without appropriate **policy-level support**. Ministries of Culture, Education, and Higher Education must acknowledge the role of digital scenography as an emerging art form. This can be achieved by:

Allocating specific funds for technology-based scenographic projects.

Offering grants for equipment purchase and digital training.

Including projection mapping as a category in national theatre awards and festivals.

Cultural policy in Egypt must evolve to reflect the changing needs and possibilities of modern theatre-making. Projection mapping offers a **transformative opportunity** to democratize quality, broaden artistic horizons, and engage new audiences—provided the necessary infrastructure and frameworks are in place.

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