Public access description

Stratford's 1958 Pericles was a spectacular affair. Directed by Tony Richardson (1928–1991), it had a cast of 39, led by Richard Johnson as Pericles and Geraldine McEwan as his daughter, Marina. The design, inspired by Greece and Byzantium, was by Tasmanian-born artist Loudon Sainthill (1918–1969). Sainthill came to England in 1949. He had designed for the stage in Australia but it was in Britain that his theatrical career developed and flourished. His lavish sets and costumes for Michael Benthall's 1951 production of The Tempest at Stratford established him as a leading designer and he became associated with a flamboyant and fantastical style, though he could also create a convincing everyday reality, as demonstrated by his interiors for the film version of John Osborne's Look Back in Anger (1959).

Richardson wanted to give unity to the play's wide-ranging action by imagining it as a shipman’s tale brought to life. Edric Connor, the first black actor to appear at Stratford, played the narrator, Gower, as a sailor who related Pericles's adventures to his fellow shipmates. The action took place within a permanent setting in the form of a ship. The V&A Theatre and Performance Department also holds Sainthill’s initial design for the set (S.2414-1986) as well as this, the final design, in which the ship has become more stylised, making more space for the actors.

Descriptive line
Set design by Loudon Sainthill for Shakespeare's play Pericles, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 8 July 1958

Museum number
S.2416-1986

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222352/set-design-for-pericles-set-design-sainthill-loudon/