

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES: STAGE DESIGNER MIMI LIEN

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[...]

"The idea for founding JACK was born out of these conversations that were happening at the TCG conference, which was so much about outreach and about audience," she explains. "The initial idea was about access and having an arts space in a neighborhood which felt like it was connecting to the people who actually live in the neighborhood. And putting on performances where audiences could relate to what they were seeing [. . .] where the people on stage look like the diverse populations of Brooklyn. That was, in short, the beginning idea of an idea."



Mimi Lien. Photo: Alec Duffy

Amina Henry's co-produced show, *The Animals*, opening at JACK on June 30, is a satire that takes place in a teacher's lounge. It deals with "all the little dramas in your life that occur in September and end in June," according to

Henry, a Brooklyn College MFA playwriting grad. The play originated after Henry was a Teaching Artist, working with public school teachers in Brooklyn.

"In Brooklyn, I am talking to the community that I'd like to be talking to more often with my work," Henry tells me, while shedding light on JACK's outreach. "They have been in talks with local Brooklyn teachers, who have been invited to come to our final dress rehearsal for free. I think that they are attempting to build relationships with the surrounding community."

Realizing an artistic vision takes time; new ideas have complications. Appreciating your roots—and building up and out—is as important as maintaining your stance.

When Mimi Lien looks ahead, she sees new possibilities. Over a five-year period, MacArthur Fellowship gives some flexibility to create more architectural exhibits and new environmental design.

To branch out, and return to where you started, is important.

"I came from architecture. I'm working in theater," Lien considers. "I still think a lot about architecture [...] I still think about working in a wide range of spaces and scales."