

in the mix



LABORS OF LOVE

devine design

Sculptor Auguste Rodin has nothing on George Becket. As production designer for NBC's daytime drama *Passions*, Becket has had to create his own gates of hell.

"It's a very complicated show," he says. "It's written with a film mindset rather than a typical soap opera."

While set in the seemingly quaint New England town of Harmony, *Passions* has a supernatural element that must manifest itself in the sets. Ceilings may open up to an ether-world; elves and witches could take flight.

Even mundane scenes present unique design challenges, such as a courtyard replicating the tiled patio and pool of the *Melrose Place* apartments. Then there was the two-story cellblock for a *Chicago* fantasy dance sequence.

Becket grew up in Europe, son of a French architect father and a Greek-Romanian physician mother. He left medical school to study interior design, then directing, and worked as a scenic artist. He directed theater in Europe before coming to the United States in 1972, landing jobs as assistant art director for *The Young and the Restless*, art director on *Capitol* and production designer on *JAG*, *Santa Barbara* and *Sunset Beach*.

His directing experience, he says, helps him visualize sets that have actors tumbling down mountains, going over a cliff or getting caught in an undersea anchor.

"I have to think like a director. We have to figure out how to do it simple, easy and within budget, accommodating cameras, booms, lights and other paraphernalia."

For instance, the mountain scene lasted less than a minute but required two sets — one of the top of the mountain, one the bottom — and a "snowball" large enough to house an actor.

"The decorating is just filling," says Becket. "To create the whole environment, that is the best part of my job." —*Roberta Wax*



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