

THE NUTCRACKER WINTER ASSEMBLY · A WORLD BY TANGLED THISTLE

Field Guide

Once a year a workshop-theater inspects its carved guardians, seats its guests for a long winter supper served by count, and lets one face turn. Nobody has to dance. This is your first look inside.

THE GUARDIAN LINE concept image of a colonnade seen from a doorway. Image liberty: the crowned cream columns with faces, the candles and lanterns, the garlands, snow-dusted trees and the gilded palace hall are invented. The Assembly's guardians are faceless columns in black lacquer and dark carved timber with aged-brass hinge discs, and there is no open flame anywhere.

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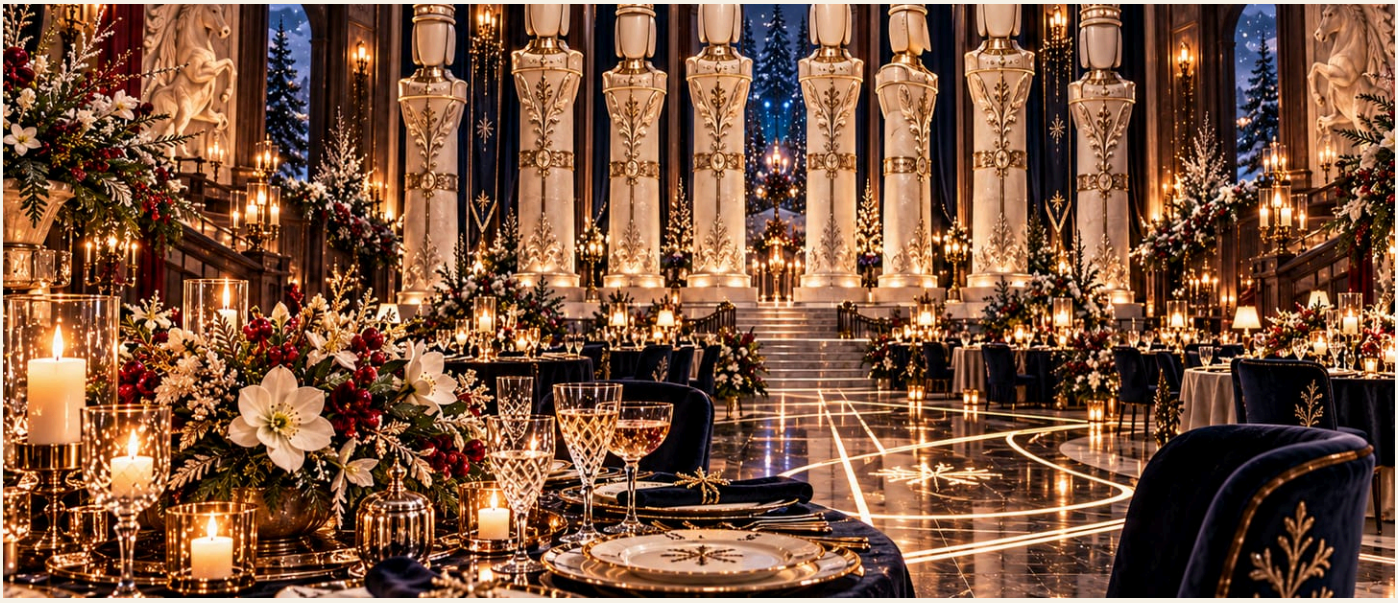
FREE PREVIEW · 16 PAGES



THE SUPPER HALL concept image. Image liberty: the round velvet-clothed tables, candles, cut crystal, flowers on the tables and crowned columns are invented. The Assembly seats ten to a table at separate black-lacquer tables with no cloth and no centerpiece, under shaded lamps.

THE WORLD · ONE

A line that holds, until it opens

Before a nutcracker was a soldier on a mantelpiece it was a tool: a hinged jaw that opens what is hard so a feast can begin. That is a much better place to start than a toy, so I started there. The Nutcracker Winter Assembly has no nutcracker figures in it at all. It has the hinge.

The Assembly is a fictional workshop-theater. Once a year, before the Christmas performance season opens, its makers inspect the line of tall carved guardians they have carved, balanced and mended, and they invite guests to watch. You walk through the rooms where the work is done. You sit down to a long Northern winter supper on a strict grid, with the guardians standing in a row along one wall, every one of them straight.

Then, after dessert, with a warm cup in your hand, one guardian's face turns thirty degrees. The straight lines of light on the silk overhead and on the open floor bend slowly into arcs. Nothing else in the room moves, and it is enough. The floor opens for dancing or for sitting, and both count.

You go home with a small brass disc that turns exactly the way the room did, set at the angle you chose, or left straight, or never taken. The guest who said no to everything had the whole evening too. I designed it for that guest first.

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WHAT THIS IS

A free first look at a World: design documentation for whoever will make the evening. It shows the idea, the rooms and how the night feels, and leaves the counts, plans and recipes to the packages. Nothing here has been built, cooked or tested. The pictures are concept images, and every caption says where one takes a liberty.

THE WORLD · TWO

The hinge, not the toy

Most winter evenings built on this story borrow its costumes. The Assembly borrows its one gesture.

E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale of 1816 and the ballet of 1892 are here only as the season and the gesture: something rigid, at the right moment, gives. So there are no toy soldiers, no mice, no sugar-plum fairies and no tutus. There are tall carved columns, each with a jaw-shaped opening at its head, a brass disc where two planes meet, and a floor ruled with a grid of fine oxblood lines that every table and bench obeys.

The guardians have no faces, and that is deliberate. A line of faceless carved columns reads as sculpture. When one of them turns, it reads as a decision. That single choice is why the evening feels grown-up: exact joinery, honest materials, food that tastes of a northern winter, and light that does the theater's work instead of machinery.

The room is strict so that the release means something. And because the release is the point, the Assembly takes great care never to make anyone earn it.

THE STORY THE MAKERS TELL

A master carver made the first guardian to open what was hard so a feast could begin. When its work was finished it turned toward the dancers. Every winter since, the makers inspect the guardians, hold the line through supper, and let one turn.

In the story it turned at midnight. In the room it simply comes after dessert, once every guest is seated and served.

WHAT IT BELIEVES

Discipline does not have to oppose play. A structure that learns when to move gives the room its delight.

WHAT IT ASKS

What happens when precision stops marching and begins to dance?

WHAT IT PROMISES YOU

Your own seat and a warm cup when one face turns, and a full evening whether you join anything or not.

What this design leaves out

No compulsory dancing. Nobody is asked to dance, perform, solve or carry anything to belong, and nobody is asked twice.

A line, not a toy box. The selected design is one faceless line, so one turned face reads as a decision. Nutcracker figures, mice, guard costume or sugar sculpture can be added, each with its own technical work.

No light show. No colored washes, strobes or color-changing light. Color comes from material and from what is in the glass.

No gears or clockwork. The movement is a hinge, not a machine.

No falling snow. Winter arrives as light on still silk. Nothing drifts onto guests, and no fabric moves overhead.

No moving furniture. No guardian, table or chair ever rotates. The change is one shallow face, while every seat and plate stays put.

No open flame. No candles and no candelabras. Table lamps are shaded, and the light belongs to the architecture.

No collecting. No names, photographs, tallies or stamps are gathered from anyone. There is nothing to complete.

Each of these protects someone: the guest who would rather watch, the cook whose food deserves a quiet room, the person who came for good company and not for a production.

"Nobody asked the guest to turn it. The Assembly had already decided that watching counted as being present."

From "The Count Released," a short story of the Assembly.

THE WORLD · THREE

Exact, playful, caring

Formal precision that knows when to soften. A black-tie-adjacent evening for adults and older teenagers, where nobody needs to dance, know the ballet or take part in anything.

Exact

Joints and count lines are legible. Every room keeps the count in its own floor, bench ends are cut square, and each supper table sits on a grid line. There is no curve at all in the arrival room.

Playful

Every room after the first adds exactly one curve: a bench return, a brass arc, a plum fin of cloth, a sag of silk, a crescent bar. By the late floor the seats themselves are arcs.

Caring

Observers keep good seats all night. Water never depends on the bar, hot food outranks the clock, hosts offer once and give space, and late cocoa and tea come to wherever you are sitting.

From a supper chair

Here is what I want it to feel like. The torte has landed, set down turned a little on the plate, which you may or may not notice. Tea or cocoa is poured at your seat. A host says, once, that a change is about to happen, and that you can stay seated, use the viewing edge or watch from where you are.

The supper music stops and a low score rises underneath the talk, so the room is never silent. Along the north wall the guardians stand as they have all evening. A screen goes up at the west end for no more than a minute and a half. On the silk overhead and across the empty floor beyond the tables, the straight lines of light begin to lean. It takes forty seconds for them to become arcs.

The screen comes down. One warm light finds the first guardian, and its face is turned outward, toward the floor where the dancing will be. In a recess that was dark a moment ago there is a single sprig of green. A host raises a glass to the piece that turns. Then the count comes back at half speed, as a slow three, and people begin to get up, or not.

If you stayed in your chair, you had the whole of it.

IN THE ASSEMBLY'S OWN WORDS

"Find the pivot."

THE GREETING AT THE DOOR

"Watching counts as being here."

SAID PLAINLY, BY ANY HOST

"You can watch, sit or join. All three belong here."

AS THE FLOOR OPENS

"The line opened. Good night."

AT THE DOOR, LEAVING

EVERY GUEST HAS, JOINED OR NOT

- A drink in hand within the first minute
- A backed seat in every room
- The full supper, or its plant twin
- A view of the Turn from their own chair
- Cocoa or tea brought to the seat
- The token, at any angle, or none

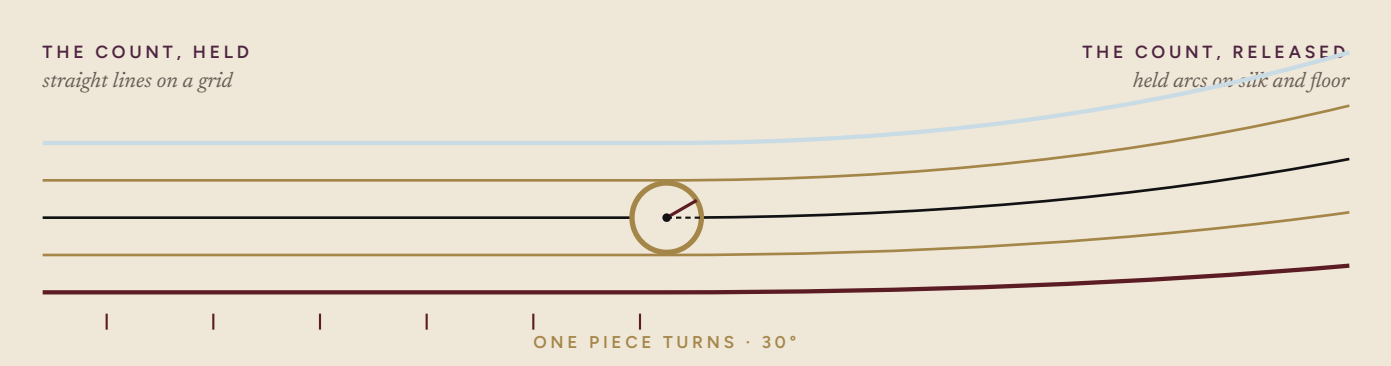
After precision, play.

I design every World for one guest first: the one who declines everything. At the Assembly, what they chose not to do costs them nothing.

DESIGN DNA

The count and the hinge

Two shapes run the whole World: a grid of straight lines that holds the room, and a brass hinge that lets one piece turn thirty degrees. Everything else follows from them.



THE COUNT, HELD AND RELEASED a diagram drawn for this guide. Five straight lines meet the pivot and go on as arcs. Drawn as an idea, not to scale, and not as a plan of any room.

Five design rules, in brief

1. **Begin strict.** Disciplined timber, black lacquer and precisely held lines. The count is in the floor of every room.
2. **Let straight become arc everywhere.** The change shows in body, floor, paper and service: a face, a line of light, a table strip, a plate.
3. **Keep the bodies fixed.** The guardians never rotate. One shallow face is exchanged by hand, and the projected line bends. The silk never moves.
4. **Give the makers real rooms.** Carving, mechanism, costume, music and confectionery each have a room with seats, hosts and finished pieces.
5. **Keep the observer in the same evening as the dancer.** Dancing never earns better food, a better view or a better keepsake.

When a choice is in doubt, it is checked against these five. Each has a consequence a builder, a florist or a cook can see in the room.

Three signatures

If only three things are made beautifully, these are the three. Each explains the change at a different size.

IN THE HAND · MECHANISM ROOM

The guarded pivot study

A long arc of brushed brass in a low case, with stops at 0° and 30°. Beside it, at seated height, a duplicate disc any guest may turn to its second stop and feel click.

IN THE ROOM · SUPPER HALL

The guardian line, one face exchanged

Three, seven or twelve carved columns along the supper hall wall. After dessert the lead guardian, named First, receives a face turned thirty degrees outward.

IN THE AIR · SNOW HALL AND SUPPER

Still silk, a changing count

Fixed panels of ivory and ice-blue silk carry projected count lines. At the Turn the lines bend into arcs and hold there until the last guest has gone.

None of the three needs a guest to do anything. All three can be understood from a chair.

IN THE PACKAGES

The rules in full with where each shows, the jaw-hinge measured, six symbols and the three signatures drawn with their sizes are in the Complete Design Concept Guide. Every object is sized and counted in the Materials & Object Guide.

ATMOSPHERE

Lacquer, raw timber, brass and cream

Clear, warm and expectant, with a held breath in it. The held breath is let go once, into easy company.

DECORATIVE DIRECTION

Black lacquer and cream plaster lead. Between them: pale raw carving wood, dark carved timber, oxblood wool and fine lines of aged brass. Walls are divided into carved relief bays on a black plinth, and the floors are ruled. Ornament gathers densely in a few places and leaves calm fields around them: plain cream plaster between the bays, a clean floor under the silk.

LIGHT

Every source is shielded, warm and fixed. Faces and food are lit like lamplight, and the only cooler light in the building falls on silk. Each supper table has its own shaded lamp, and nothing on a table stands taller than its shade, so every seat sees the guardians. Nothing is colored, nothing pulses, and there is no flame.

SOUND

Each room keeps its own, below conversation: soft carving taps in the Carver's Hall, one controlled click in the Mechanism Room, sustained strings under the silk and near silence in its alcove, a counted chamber rhythm over supper. The Turn is never silence. A low score runs under it.

SCENT

Only from real things a guest can see: clean wood, orange peel in the welcome cup, vanilla and cardamom from the Salon tea, the supper itself. No room has a diffuser, and the Mechanism Room and the Atelier are fragrance-free.

FLOWERS, AS ARCHITECTURE

Noble fir stood upright in regimented columns, Christmas roses in straight troughs set into lit wall niches, red amaryllis under study in the atelier, and a pear branch with cyclamen where the evening softens. Nothing is overhead, nothing is on a supper table, and no plant comes near the food.

SERVICE

Hosts stand straight and speak plainly. A course is never interrupted for a cue, and a cue always waits for hot food. Plant versions land on the same plates at the same moment, and nobody announces them.



WINTER AS LIGHT concept image. Image liberty: the spiral ribbon, the staircase, piano, candles, round tables and faces on the columns are invented. The Assembly's snow is three still panels of ivory and ice-blue silk; only the light on them changes.



THE SUGAR SALON BAR concept image of a curved bar. Image liberty: the candles, red velvet seating and quilted cream front are invented. The Salon is a stepped crescent bar against plum walls with cranberry glass, and zero-proof drinks are poured first.

FIRST TEN SECONDS	A low, exact room. A black portal, a coat taken, a garnet-red drink already on its way.
AFTER FIVE MINUTES	A piece of carving in your hands, unfinished on purpose, and a seat in front of the finished one.
LATER	Tea on a wool bench under still silk, while the count runs straight overhead.

THE ROOMS, IN THE ORDER GUESTS MEET THEM

Eight rooms, one curve at a time

The first room has no curve in it at all. Every room after it adds exactly one, so by the time the room turns, you have been taught how to read it.

1 Guard Vestibule

Low, black and exact. Your coat goes, a First Pivot highball arrives within the minute, and two rye crisps come on a straight tray. Three carved studies show one relief raw, stained and lacquered. A brass token is offered once.

2 Carver's Hall

The making room. Four jaw profiles cut through a carved divider, a guarded bench where finished pieces are shown by hand, samples to touch, and one pencil line that survived the lacquer. Its curve is a bench return.

3 Mechanism Room

One long arc of brushed brass in a low case, and a duplicate disc at seated height that you may turn from 0° to 30°. One click. This is the whole evening in your hand, two hours early.

4 Costume and Ribbon Atelier

Six tall fins of cloth, straight until the last one, which ends in a single plum curve. A worktable under one flat silk canopy, red amaryllis under study, and a card on which to trace the curve or keep the straight line.

5 Snow Rehearsal Hall

The quiet room. Still silk hangs overhead with straight count lines moving across it in cool light. A wool alcove holds tea for two and a clear view. The alcove is out of the count: nobody will ask you anything there.

6 Sugar Salon Bar

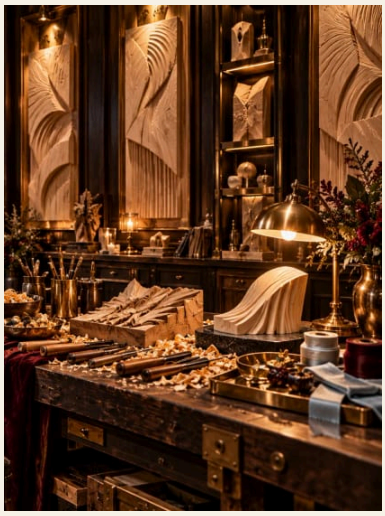
Plum walls, cranberry glass and a stepped crescent bar: the first full curve of the night. Every drink has a zero-proof equal in the same glass. The only two sweet colors in the World live here, as tiny notes.

7 Assembly Supper Hall

The measured room. Separate black-lacquer tables of ten stand on an oxblood floor grid, a cream linen strip down each and a small brass disc at every place. Along the north wall stand the guardians, three, seven or twelve of them, side-lit, each with a hinge disc catching the light. Supper is served here by count, and the Turn happens here, in view of every chair.

8 Pivot Stage and Late Floor

The release. A low stage with the musicians on the guests' level, an open floor whose edge line has changed from oxblood to brass, and arced banquettes of four around it. Cocoa, tea, bonbons and shortbread come to every seat. Dance, or sit and watch the dancing. The view is the same from both.



THE CARVER'S HALL concept image of relief panels and a bench. Image liberty: the feathered reliefs, candles, glassware and clutter of tools are invented. The hall shows four plain jaw profiles and finished pieces behind a guard; nothing is cut as a performance.

TWO WAYS THROUGH

The full loop takes in every room before supper. A short path goes from the vestibule straight to the atelier, the Snow Hall and the bar.

Either is the complete evening. Every room has a backed seat, and the routes are step-free.



THE ORDER OF THE ROOMS a diagram drawn for this guide. It shows sequence only: it is not a floor plan, and distances mean nothing. The measured plans are in the Planning & Scaling Toolkit.

In the packages: each room has a page of its own in the Complete Design Concept Guide, with its purpose, light, sound and how it changes through the night. The rooms are drawn and measured at three sizes in the Planning & Scaling Toolkit, and everything in them is specified in the Materials & Object Guide.

THE EVENING, STEP BY STEP

One evening, held and then let go

About four hours twenty from doors to the last coat: a warm start, a rest before supper, a long measured middle, one held moment and a generous late hour.

COMPOSURE

1 Arrival

GUARD VESTIBULE · DOORS

A coat taken, a drink within the minute, two bites. “Find the pivot,” says the host, and offers a small brass token, once. Take it, turn it, or leave it on the desk.

CURIOSITY · EASE

2 The rooms

CARVER’S HALL · MECHANISM ROOM · ATELIER · SNOW HALL · SUGAR SALON

The working rooms open a quarter of an hour in; the Snow Hall and the bar a little later. Take them in any order, sit in any of them, or go straight to a drink. Water is always within reach.

BELONGING

3 Supper, in counts

ASSEMBLY SUPPER HALL · AN HOUR AFTER DOORS

Ten to a table. Bread set in a line and then passed, soup poured at the table, a shared bowl between each pair, the roast landing for everyone together. Five counts, square and unhurried.

RECOGNITION

4 The Turn

FROM EVERY SUPPER SEAT · AFTER DESSERT

The torte arrives turned on its plate; a cup is poured at your seat. Then one face is exchanged, and the lines of light bend into arcs over forty seconds. No guest moves for it.

RELEASE

5 The late floor

PIVOT STAGE AND LATE FLOOR · SUGAR SALON

Music, cocoa and tea, bonbons and poppy shortbread passed in dark boxes. Dance, sit on an arced banquette, or stay at your supper table. Service reaches you in all three.

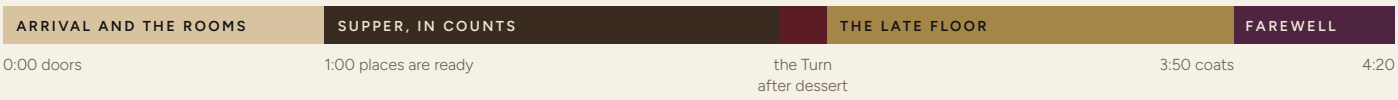
KEEPING

6 Farewell

THE DOOR · ABOUT THREE HOURS FIFTY IN

Coat first, then water or tea, then the token in its plum-lined sleeve: straight, pinned at the dance angle, handed back, or never taken. “The line opened. Good night.”

THE SHAPE OF THE EVENING, IN TIME FROM DOORS



NOTHING IS COMPULSORY

Every small encounter in the rooms is optional, offered once and never a gate to anything else. There is no phone to use, no tally to fill and no name to give.

Dancing never earns better food, a better view or a better keepsake. Staying seated is the full experience.

THE QUIET WAY THROUGH

A backed seat in every room. A quiet door from the supper hall to the Snow Hall alcove, which sees the same changed arc as the floor. No strobe, blackout, fog or added fragrance, and no cue that depends on hearing or on color alone.

Large-print and raised-line cards are part of the design, and cocoa and tea come to the seat.

A guest’s-eye view, not a run of show. Timings are design targets, unperformed; the cues, minutes, routes and staffing are in the Planning & Scaling Toolkit.

AT THE TABLE

Supper in counts, drinks in pairs

Food first, story second. Here is the whole supper and the bar by their plain names: what each is and when it lands, not how to make it.



THE RELEASE concept image of a plum-almond torte with a pastry arc. Image liberty: the gilt-patterned china, berries and candlelight are invented, and no dish has been cooked or photographed. The Assembly's plate is plain cream, set down turned thirty degrees.



THREE FROM THE BAR concept image of a plum coupe, a sparkling flute and a rocks glass. Image liberty: the toy nutcracker, gilt tray, lamps, tree and velvet are invented, and no drink has been mixed or photographed. Glass, garnish and color are for the drinks records to settle.

THE SUPPER · ASSEMBLY SUPPER HALL

ON ARRIVAL	Rye crisps with beet-cured salmon or beet and mushroom terrine
FIRST COUNT	Rye-brioche rolls, cultured butter and caraway
SECOND COUNT	Beet-cured salmon, horseradish cream, dill and rye crisp *or beet and mushroom terrine, horseradish oat cream, dill and rye crisp*
THIRD COUNT	Roasted parsnip soup, brown butter, apple and almond, poured at the table
FOURTH COUNT	Warm red cabbage, pear and bitter greens with mustard and hazelnut, a bowl for every two
FIFTH COUNT	Roast chicken, prune-plum jus, potato pavé and glazed roots *or roasted celeriac and mushroom, prune-plum jus, plant potato pavé and roots*
THE BRIDGE	Cheese pastry twists with black pepper and winter herbs, on an arcing tray
THE RELEASE	Plum-almond torte, crème fraîche, dark caramel and filo arc *or plant no-almond plum torte with dark caramel and crisp pastry curve*
LATE	Chocolate-hazelnut bonbon and poppy shortbread

THE DRINKS · ZERO-PROOF FIRST

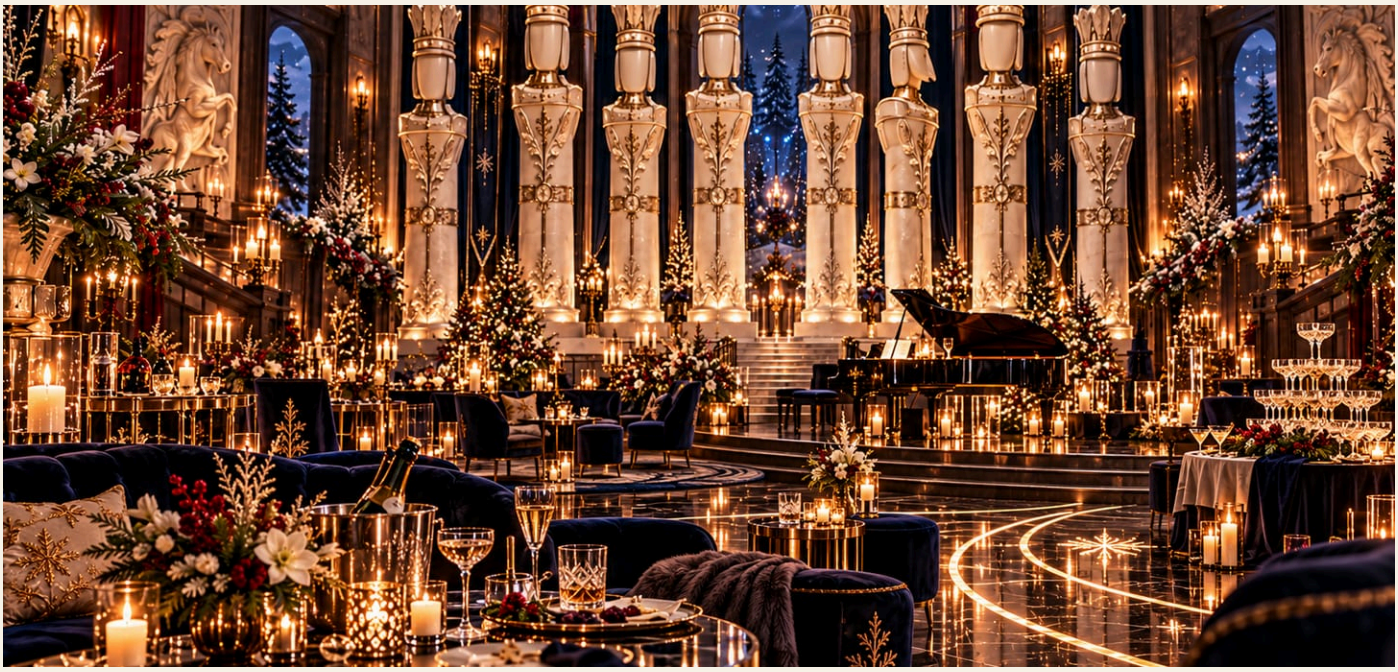
AT THE DESK	**First Pivot.** Zero-proof cranberry-tea-orange soda, in your hand within a minute
SETTLING	**Snow Silk.** White grape, lemon, chamomile and fine bubbles; zero-proof, and the glass for the toast
AT THE BAR	**Plum Count.** Plum-verjus zero-proof aperitif *its twin: gin and dry plum aperitif*
AT THE BAR	**Brass Waltz.** Toasted-barley zero-proof cordial *its twin: rye and toasted almond old fashioned*
ALL EVENING	**Sugar Salon tea** with vanilla, orange and cardamom
LATE	**After the Count cocoa** with hazelnut and malt *or plant cocoa without hazelnut or malt*
THROUGHOUT	Still and sparkling water from doors to close. Dry sparkling wine, a supper white and a light red, coffee late.

> EQUAL, ALWAYS
>
> Every adult drink has a zero-proof twin of its own recipe, in the same glass, poured first when both are ordered. Alcohol is never the default and never pre-poured. The plant plates land with the others, on identical china, and the plant cocoa is marked only by a small plum dot on its cup, so nothing has to be said aloud.

The measured recipes, quantities, prep clock and kitchen plans for every dish, drink and twin are in the Salty & Clever menu kit *Supper in Five Counts*, with home menus for 6 to 24 guests. It comes with the Complete World Package, or on its own at saltnotes.blog. This guide holds no recipes. **Developed recipes, not kitchen-tested.** Ingredients are named in words, and no dish is claimed to be free of any allergen.

THE TURN OF THE NIGHT

The count releases its hold



AFTER THE TURN concept image of the late floor, with arcs of light in the floor. Image liberty: the crowned columns, grand piano, champagne tower, sofas and candles are invented. The Assembly's late floor has a low stage, arced banquettes of four and a brass edge line, and its guardians stand in the supper hall.

One Turn, once, at every size of Assembly. It waits until dessert has landed and every guest is seated and served; a guest still eating keeps the plate, and no tray crosses the room.

Then two members of staff, behind a raised screen, exchange the lead guardian's shallow carved face for its twin, whose shoulder is set thirty degrees outward. The projected count on the silk and on the open floor bends from straight lines to held arcs. The edge of the late floor changes from oxblood to brass. As each table is cleared, a host asks, "May I change the strip?" and the straight linen strip is swapped for one woven with an arc.

The host says, "The line has learned another angle," and the toast is to the piece that turns.

WHAT CHANGES

- One shallow face, by hand
- The lines of light, straight to arc
- The floor's edge line, to brass
- The table strips, one by one
- A sprig of holly, where there was none

WHAT NEVER MOVES

- The guardians' carved bodies
- The silk overhead
- Every table and chair
- Any guest, unless they wish to



WHAT EVERY GUEST MAY TAKE HOME

A brass pivot token, 75 mm (about 3 in) across, whose center turns from straight to thirty degrees and stops. It travels in a plum-lined cream felt sleeve with a fold-out that shows the room in both states.

THE PIVOT TOKEN drawn study of the token and its sleeve; a concept illustration, not to scale. No token has been manufactured.

> "The line moves because one piece turns."
>
> PRINTED ON THE FOLD-OUT

IF THE EXCHANGE CANNOT HAPPEN

The design says so plainly: nobody pretends it did. The hosts carry the softer rhythm themselves, the late floor opens, and the evening ends well. I like a World that tells you what to do when the clever part fails.

In the packages: why it happens and the forty seconds drawn frame by frame (Concept Guide), the face and how it is exchanged (Materials & Object Guide), and who does what on one line, with the fallback (Planning & Scaling Toolkit). The exchange is a design intent for your own makers and engineers to resolve; nothing here has been staged.

COLOR, MATERIAL, BLOOM

Twelve colors, each named for a material

The palette is the room's own materials, measured. Named colors carry material, not paint, and no color in the building comes from a light.

1 Black Lacquer Guardian #121114

2 Pale Raw Carving Wood #D8C3A0

3 Oxblood Bench Wool #5C1C24

4 Cream Plaster #EEE6D4

5 Aged Brass Pivot #A58649

6 Pale Ice Blue Snow Silk #C9DCE6

7 Deep Plum Felt #4E2440

8 Pistachio Sugar Note #A9C08A

9 Sugar-Pink Note #E6B7BE

10 Dark Carved Timber #3A2B21

11 Cranberry Sugar Salon Glass #8F1E33

12 Dark Noble Fir #213A2C

HOW MUCH OF EACH, ACROSS THE WHOLE EVENING



Cream plaster and black lacquer lead and together make about a third of everything a guest sees. Pistachio and sugar-pink are one percent each and live only in the Sugar Salon, so the World never turns into candy-land. The colors are sRGB design values, drawn here as flat swatches; a printer's proof has the final word on paper.

MATERIALS

Dark carved timber and pale raw carving wood side by side, so the making shows. Black lacquer, cream plaster, brushed aged brass at every joint. Oxblood wool on benches, deep plum felt, cream linen, still snow silk and cranberry glass.

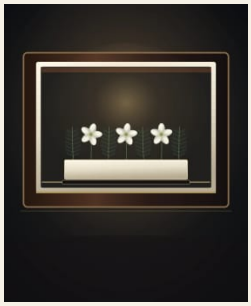
BLOOM

Noble fir and glossy magnolia, Christmas rose, a pear branch with cyclamen, one 'Red Lion' amaryllis, rosemary at the bar, and a single late sprig of holly, leaves only. Seven compositions, all architectural, none on a supper table.

OBJECTS

The carved guardian line and its one exchangeable face. The guarded pivot study. The stepped crescent bar. The ten-place lacquer table with its linen strip and brass place disc. The pivot token, its sleeve and fold-out.







THREE PLATES drawn studies of the regimented fir column, the Christmas rose trough in its lit niche, and the holly sprig in the turned face's recess. Concept illustrations: not to scale, simplified, and not a planting or making instruction. The holly is drawn in a hinged frame; in the design the face is exchanged whole and never swings open.

NEVER IN THE ASSEMBLY

Red-and-green ballet decoration, a candy-land pastel scheme, colored light washes, gold as a field, garlands, overhead flowers, floral foam or dyed stems. Hellebore, cyclamen, amaryllis and holly are harmful if eaten, so plants and food are kept apart by rule.

In the packages: every color's role room by room, each material's finish and behavior in light, and each object's size and make-or-source route (Materials & Object Guide); every composition with species, stems, vessel, care and substitutes (Floral & Tablescape Detail Pack).

BEFORE YOU DECIDE

Three sizes, a weekend, and whether it suits you

30

GUESTS · SMALL

Three guardians, three supper tables.

80

GUESTS · STANDARD

Seven guardians, eight supper tables.

340

GUESTS · GRAND

Twelve guardians, thirty-four supper tables.

The same eight rooms, the same story and the same single Turn at every size. The table of ten, the chair and the token never scale; the building around them does. All sizes are planning values, written to be held against your own rooms.

THE ASSEMBLY WEEKEND · THREE DAYS, FOUR OCCASIONS

Count one
Inspection Eve

The first evening. A standing reception and a walk along the guardian line, with bites and drinks passed.

Count two
Open Workshop

The second day, late morning into afternoon. Demonstrations and a trestle lunch by daylight. No Turn.

Count three
The Assembly

That evening: all of this guide, from the first drink at the desk to the last coat.

Count four
Morning After the Count

The third morning. Breakfast in the turned room, with the arcs still held.

It suits you if

- You want a winter evening as generous to the guest who watches as to the one who dances.
- You love joinery, good tailoring, long tables and exact timing more than spectacle.
- You are planning for a household, a society, a theater or museum, a hotel or a venue, and want one story at whatever size you are.
- You have people to make it, a florist, a kitchen, musicians, a carpenter, or you are the one who briefs them.
- You like the idea of a big moment that is ninety seconds long and almost entirely still.

It may not suit you if

- **You want the ballet.** The selected design has no soldiers, mice, sugar plums or tutus, and no dance anyone has to learn.
- **You want a show.** No colored light, no snow machine, no countdown.
- **You want candlelight.** There is no open flame in the design at all.
- **You need someone to run it.** This is planning and design documentation, not an event service: no staff, venue, catering or installation.
- **You need permission to trade.** The packages grant no hospitality or commercial-venue rights.

WHAT YOU WOULD BE BUYING

Design and planning documentation for your own occasions and projects. It is concept design: nothing in it has been built, cooked or tested, the pictures are concept images, and the captions say where they take liberties. Site, venue, engineering, supplier, kitchen and permit decisions are yours, made with the people who know your building. The guardian line and the face exchange, in particular, are for your own makers and engineers.

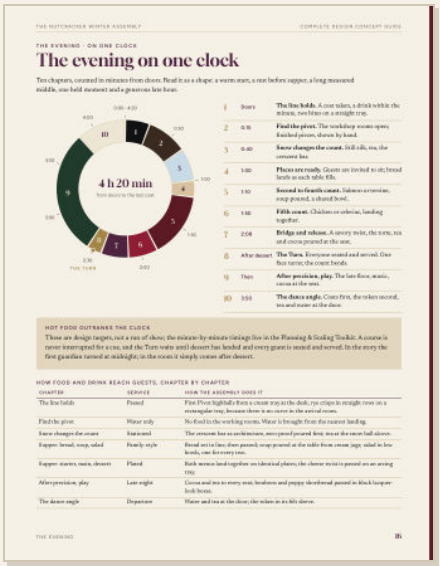
MAKE IT SMALLER

If you keep only one thing from the Assembly, keep the Turn: one piece, one angle, once, while everyone is seated and fed. One table, one plate set down turned and one quiet pause is still the Assembly.

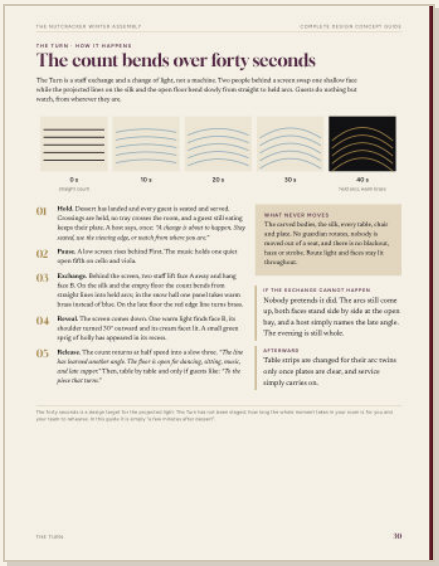
INSIDE THE PACKAGES

Pages from each book

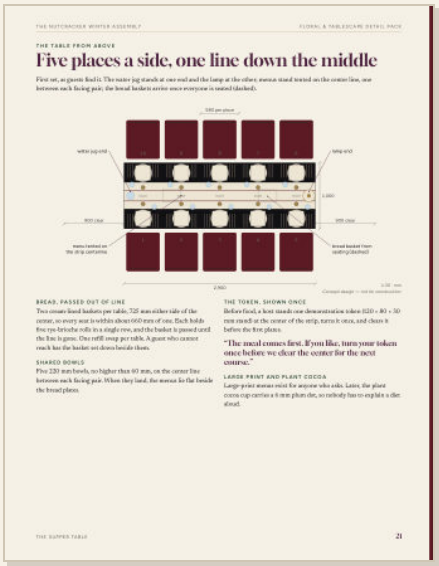
Six real pages from the four books, exactly as they are, shown small. Nothing has been mocked up for this guide.



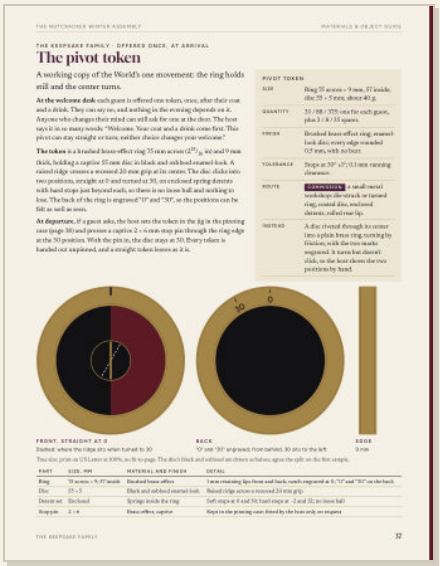
CONCEPT GUIDE · PAGE 16 OF 53
The evening on one clock: ten chapters on a single dial, and how food and drink reach guests in each.



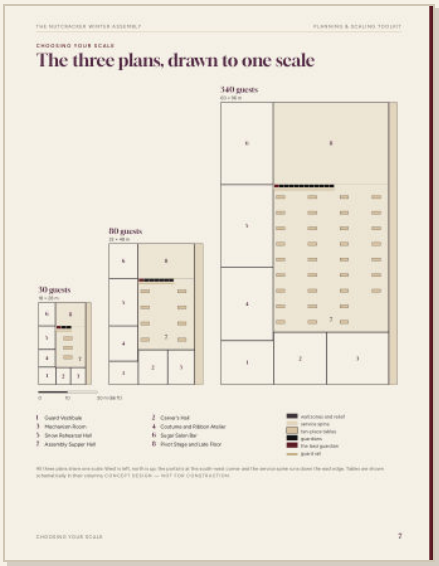
CONCEPT GUIDE · PAGE 30 OF 53
The count bending over forty seconds, in five frames and five steps, with what never moves.



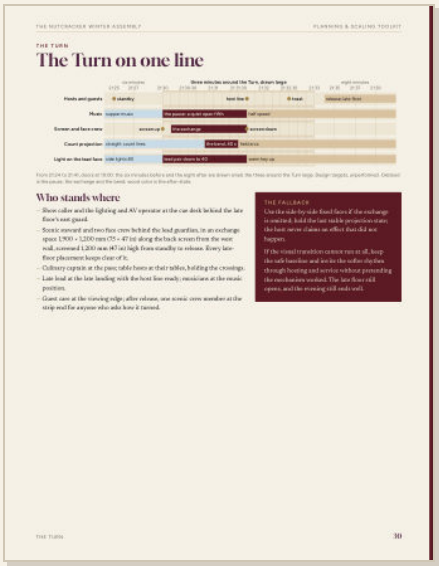
FLORAL & TABLESCAPE · PAGE 21 OF 36
A supper table from above: ten places, the strip, lamp, jug and baskets, drawn to scale.



MATERIALS & OBJECTS · PAGE 37 OF 44
The pivot token, front, back and edge, with its parts, finishes and tolerances.



PLANNING & SCALING · PAGE 7 OF 49
The Assembly at 30, 80 and 340 guests, its eight rooms drawn to one scale.



PLANNING & SCALING · PAGE 30 OF 49
The Turn on one line: who does what, who stands where, and the fallback.

Pages from version 1.0 of each book. Captions give the page number printed on the page and the length of the book.

INSIDE THE PACKAGES

Two more, a little larger



THE NUTCRACKER WINTER ASSEMBLY — COMPLETE DESIGN CONCEPT GUIDE

ROOM BY ROOM · 7 OF 8

Assembly Supper Hall

30 · 80 · 340 GUESTS
140 · 456 · 1,950 m²

Everyone fed at the same grid, and everyone sees the one turn.

Silk band overhead, lowest edge 5,200 mm

Column 4,200 mm on a 180 mm deck

900 mm body, 900 mm clear, then a 900 mm rail

Supper module, 760 mm high

Black and cream, warm light on faces and food, brass hinge discs on carved columns and still silk overhead. Three, seven or twelve columns, each 1,600 mm wide at 1,700 mm centers, stand on a guarded display strip along the north wall. First, at the far west end, carries the face that will be exchanged. It has to be beautiful before it changes.

Guests first see the set grid from a lit passage along the south side. When invited they sit at ten-place modules, pass the bread, eat the supper, and may turn a token once before the center is cleared. At the Turn they watch from their own seat, then move through the open bay or stay put. The quiet door to the snow hall alcove is open all evening.

FLOOR AND OVERHEAD

Dark matte floor with 40 mm oxblood lines on the 600 mm grid, aligned to the table ends and the guardian bays; after the Turn, brass arcs are projected on empty circulation only. A cream ceiling with brass rails covers the south two-thirds; over the colonnade it opens to a black plane carrying the still silk band, clear above every seated guest.

BOTANICALS

Low troughs live in lined niches along the east wall, one for each table: four noble fir tips and three Christmas roses, never taller than 230 mm and never on the dining top. Fir-and-magnolia columns line the west wall.

AT THREE SIZES

One, two or four columns of tables at 30, 80 and 340 guests. The grid multiplies and the colonnade lengthens; the one face stays one.

10 SECONDS	A grid of set tables facing a line of tall carved columns.
5 MINUTES	Bread lands in straight lines, and the line breaks as it is passed.
30 MINUTES	The lead face has turned; the room is softer, and you are still in your seat.

SAID HERE

"To the piece that turns."

Hear: a counted chamber rhythm at conversation level. **Smell:** the supper itself, and nothing added.

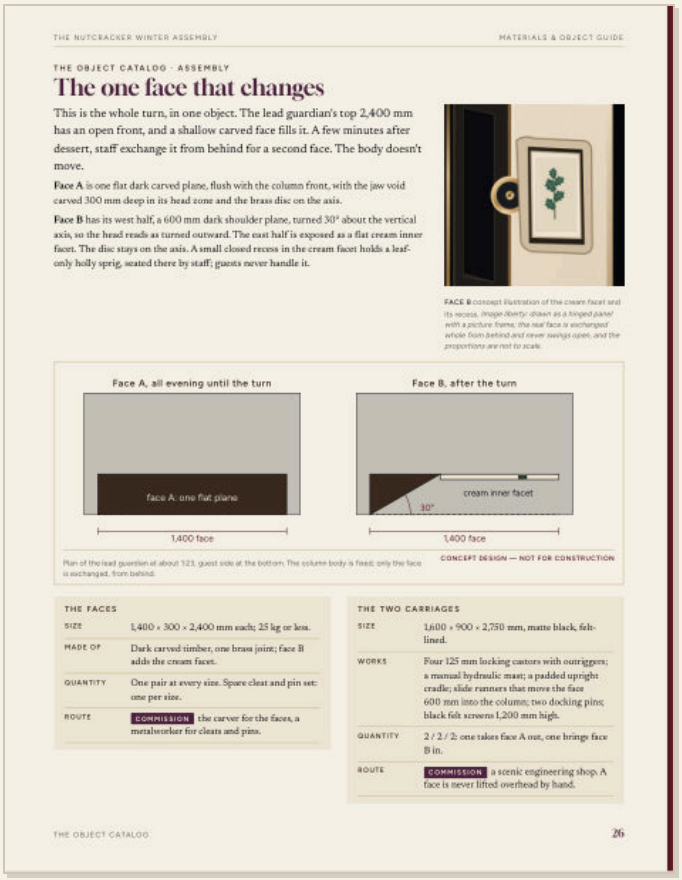
Plates come in from the north end and go out at the south, with one host for every table. No cue ever interrupts hot food.

ARRIVAL	OCCUPIED	CHANGED	CLOSING
Tables set, colonnade straight, silk with straight count, lamps on, the south passage lit.	Supper served as food is ready; the token shown and its carrier cleared before dishes land.	A musical pause; one face exchanged; the count bent into arcs; then the open bay.	Tables kept, not abandoned; the turned face and arcs held until the last guest leaves.

ROOM BY ROOM 27

COMPLETE DESIGN CONCEPT GUIDE · PAGE 27 OF 53

A room page: the Assembly Supper Hall, with its section, floor and overhead, flowers, what a guest notices at ten seconds, five minutes and thirty, and how the room changes through the night. Every room has one.



THE NUTCRACKER WINTER ASSEMBLY — MATERIALS & OBJECT GUIDE

THE OBJECT CATALOG · ASSEMBLY

The one face that changes

This is the whole turn, in one object. The lead guardian's top 2,400 mm has an open front, and a shallow carved face fills it. A few minutes after dessert, staff exchange it from behind for a second face. The body doesn't move.

Face A is one flat dark carved plane, flush with the column front, with the jaw void carved 300 mm deep in its head zone and the brass disc on the axis.

Face B has its west half, a 600 mm dark shoulder plane, turned 30° about the vertical axis, so the head reads as turned outward. The east half is exposed as a flat cream inner facet. The disc stays on the axis. A small closed recess in the cream facet holds a leaf-only holly sprig, seated there by staff; guests never handle it.

FACE B concept illustration of the cream facet and its recess. *Image liberty: drawn as a hinged panel with a picture frame; the real face is exchanged whole from behind and never swings open, and the proportions are not to scale.*

Face A, all evening until the turn

face A: one flat plane

1,400 face

Face B, after the turn

cream inner facet

30°

1,400 face

Plan of the lead guardian at about 1:23, guest side at the bottom. The column body is fixed; only the face is exchanged, from behind.

CONCEPT DESIGN — NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

THE FACES

SIZE	1,400 × 300 × 2,400 mm each; 25 kg or less.
MADE OF	Dark carved timber, one brass joint; Face B adds the cream facet.
QUANTITY	One pair at every size. Spare cleat and pin set: one per size.
ROUTE	COMMISSION the carver for the faces, a metalworker for cleats and pins.

THE TWO CARRIAGES

SIZE	1,600 × 900 × 2,750 mm, matte black, felt-lined.
WORKS	Four 125 mm locking castors with outriggers; a manual hydraulic mast; a padded upright cradle; slide runners that move the face 600 mm into the column; two docking pins; black felt screens 1,200 mm high.
QUANTITY	2 / 2 / 2: one takes face A out, one brings face B in.
ROUTE	COMMISSION a scenic engineering shop. A face is never lifted overhead by hand.

THE OBJECT CATALOG 26

MATERIALS & OBJECT GUIDE · PAGE 26 OF 44

The one face that changes: both faces in plan, what they are made of, the carriages that bring them, and who to commission.

THIS GUIDE SHOWS

- The idea, its beliefs and what it leaves out
- The design rules and signatures, in brief
- All eight rooms, described
- The evening as a guest walks it
- The supper and drinks, by name
- The twelve colors, with their values
- Three sizes and the Weekend, in outline

THE PACKAGES HOLD

- Every room in full, with plans at three sizes
- Every stem, material and object, sized and counted
- The run of show, cue sheet, light states and crew
- The evening's paper, editable and print-ready
- Worksheets and an Excel planning workbook
- Every recipe and kitchen plan, in the menu kit
- A Start Here guide that maps all of it

HOW THESE PREVIEWS ARE MADE

Each preview is a picture of a finished page from version 1.0 of that book, reduced to thumbnail size. Titles and drawings read clearly; the small print is too small to work from, on purpose. There is no text layer under the pictures, and the full-size pages are not inside this file. The four books run to 53, 36, 44 and 49 pages, 182 in all.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

The Complete World Package

Four books, the evening's paper, the menu kit and a guide to all of it. Each part stands on its own; together they are everything I made for the Assembly.



Start Here — in the package

PDF · WITH THE COMPLETE WORLD PACKAGE

The shortest part. It maps every file, says which to open for which job, and walks one route from the first decision to the night itself.



Complete Design Concept Guide — $29

53 PAGES · PDF

The whole World: the idea, the design language, the evening on one clock, all eight rooms, the Turn, the palette, materials, flowers and objects, the menu at a glance, three sizes and the Weekend.



Floral & Tablescape Detail Pack — $14

36 PAGES · PDF

Seven botanical compositions with species, stems, vessels, care and substitutes; the supper table place by place; the plant order, a florist's page and a care timeline.



Materials & Object Guide — $12

44 PAGES · PDF

The twelve colors in use, every material and how it behaves in light, and every object in walking order, from the guardian line to the pivot token, with sizes, schedules and a sourcing worksheet.



Planning & Scaling Toolkit — $24

49 PAGES · PDF · PLUS AN EXCEL WORKBOOK

Three sizes drawn to one scale, the whole Assembly counted, crew and roles, the production timeline, run of show and cue sheet, setup and strike, the Weekend and a budget framework.



Event Artwork & Paper Collection — in the package

ZIP · EDITABLE SVG AND PRINT-READY PDF

The evening's paper: editable and print-ready invitation, menu, place card, sign and guest-paper artwork.



Supper in Five Counts — $29

SALTY & CLEVER MENU KIT · 24 files

The supper itself: three menus, a recipe book and bench cards, a drinks book with every zero-proof twin, two Excel planners, a scaling and purchasing guide, prep-clock wall charts, hosting plans, menu, role and drink cards, and briefs for a caterer or a restaurant. Home plans for 6 to 24 guests. Developed recipes, not kitchen-tested.

THE COMPLETE WORLD PACKAGE · **$49**

All four books and the workbook, the Event Artwork & Paper Collection, the menu kit *Supper in Five Counts* and the Start Here guide, in one download. Bought one by one, the four books and the menu kit come to $108; the paper comes only with the package.

ONE BY ONE

Each book is sold singly on the World's page at tangledthistle.blog. The menu kit is sold on its own at saltnotes.blog; the single books do not include it. This Field Guide is free, with no sign-up.

Prices in US dollars at the time of this version; the World's page shows the current ones. Digital files, US Letter. Planning documentation for your own occasions; it is not an event service.

BUILD THE WORLD

“Find the pivot.”

THE ASSEMBLY’S GREETING, AT THE DOOR

If the Assembly has your attention, the rest of it is waiting on the World’s page. Every part is there, one by one or together as the Complete World Package, which also brings the Salty & Clever menu kit *Supper in Five Counts* and the Event Artwork & Paper Collection. The menu kit is also sold on its own.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS AND VENUES

The packages are for personal occasions and projects. If you would like to stage the Assembly at a hospitality property or commercial venue, that is by inquiry: write through tangledthistle.blog/contact/.

WHERE TO FIND IT

The World’s page: every package	tangledthistle.blog/design-atelier/worlds/the-nutcracker-winter-assembly/
The menu kit, on its own	saltnotes.blog/menus/supper-in-five-counts/
Hospitality properties, by inquiry	tangledthistle.blog/contact/

THREE FIRST STEPS

1

Read

The Complete Design Concept Guide, straight through, the way a guest would walk the rooms.

2

Choose

Your size: 30, 80 or 340 guests, one table at home, or the three days of the Assembly Weekend.

3

Keep

The Turn, whatever else you change: one piece, one angle, once. It is the one thing the Assembly never gives up.

Tangled Thistle

The Nutcracker Winter Assembly · Field Guide · free preview

For your own occasions and projects. Print it, adapt it, and share printed pages with the people helping you make it happen. Not for resale or redistribution.

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