It is only when you have this skeleton that you can begin adding the flesh—the objects. Even if you are given indications by the director or the author, saying: 'A door to the right, a window to the left', the door can still be raised or lowered relative to the stage, which quite alters the atmosphere of the piece. So much for the ensemble.

An example: in *La Folle de Chaillot* I was asked for a cellar in the second act. A cellar—that at once suggests a low ceiling, but I considered that if the ceiling were made very low the realism of it would be too oppressive, and in fact the novelty—and the success—of the set lies in my having taken exactly the opposite line: I made an enormous, very high cellar which took people by surprise, but which suits the dramatic atmosphere of this second act.

What comes next is more mysterious. It depends on your sense of the theatre. You can put an object ten metres long on the stage without its being seen, or you can put a tiny thing on a table and everybody will see it. For that you have to have a feeling and some experience of what gets seen in the theatre.

What I esteem above everything else is empty space. That is a general rule to be guided by, and I would say as much to all young decorators: Don't clutter up your stage. There is always a tendency to do too much. When I did *L'Ecole des Femmes* with Jouvet, for instance, we used the very minimum. There was a little garden, two rose-trees, five candelabra; and the décor, which was a big success, gave birth to a number of décors that were similar except for the addition of twenty flower-pots and twenty chandeliers. 'We'll go one richer than Bérard', But the action was at once lost in this luxuriante.

The finest *mises en scène* have been done by Meyerhold in Russia. They were so fine precisely because there was nothing there. It was an art of extraordinary adhesive power. In Ostrovsky's *Forest* everything was suggested by a plank and three steps, and it was marvellous. Because this nothing is everything. And everything is there because everything has been taken away. Obviously, you can't make anything with nothing. You have to start by putting everything there and then take it away bit by bit. In the first act of *La Folle de Chaillot* again—the terrace of the café *Chez Francis*—I started with an absolutely complete décor in my head, with the chestnuts and the façade of the building; then I began taking away whatever was not essential. I removed the trees—keeping the bench because the bench was necessary for the action—I put a little bit of grey to indicate the Avenue Montaigne; when I had gone so far, the building I had left was too heavy, so I did away with the walls and kept only the windows to suggest the building.