THOLIAN STARSHIP (2268)

CREW: ONE
LAUNCHED: 23rd C
LENGTH: 15 METERS
WEAPON: THOLIAN WEB
Stand assembly:

1. Place the stand on the back of the ship.

2. Secure the stand with the included screws.

Final position:

- The stand is fixed to the back of the ship.

**OPERATED BY:**

THE THOLIAN ASSEMBLY

**ACTIVE:**

23rd CENTURY

**LENGTH:**

15 METERS

**CREW:**

ONE

**CAPTAIN:**

COMMANDER LOSKENE

**WEAPONRY:**

PARTICLE BEAM EMITTERS, THOLIAN WEB

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**THOLIAN STARSHIP SPECIFICATION**

**OPERATED BY:**

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**ACTIVE:**

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**LENGTH:**

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ONE

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The Tholian Starship of the 23rd century was a highly unusual-looking vessel that resembled the tip of a spear. It did not appear to have separate elements such as a command center or warp nacelles or indeed any of the parts that normally made up the components of a starship. It was nevertheless capable of warp speeds and possessed powerful weaponry.

The Tholian starship seen in 2268 was operated by Commander Loskene. He, like all Tholians, was non-humanoid and his face appeared to ripple and change color. This was probably because Tholians required incredibly hot environments to be comfortable, and the shimmering effect was down to the heat aboard his ship.

Scans taken of a Tholian ship in 2152 by Enterprise NX-01 revealed that its interior environmental conditions were set at more than 200˚C.

**DATA FEED**
Scans taken of a Tholian ship in 2152 by Enterprise NX-01 revealed that its interior environmental conditions were set at more than 200˚C.
After beaming aboard the Defiant, Captain Kirk and his officers discovered that the entire crew was dead. It appeared that they had killed each other, but a first Dr. McCoy could not work out what caused this collective murderous behavior. After studying the brain, resulting in homicidal behavior.

The Defiant was on a mission to rescue the missing Defiant in an uncharted region of space. Shortly after, a Tholian starship arrived claiming the region belonged to them. Loskene became impatient when the Enterprise refused to leave an area of space claimed by his Tholians. He launched an attack that disabled the Enterprise engines, but in return his ship was blasted by the Starfleet ship's phasers.

Loskene fired his ship's energy weapon at the Enterprise, which fused its power supply converters and left it adrift. The Enterprise fired back, but only temporarily disabled Loskene’s ship. They had almost completed the task, but Loskene was reluctant to believe that the Enterprise was trying to rescue him.

The Tholian ships were just minutes away from completing the energy web when the Enterprise crew managed to rescue their captain. As soon as engineering restored power to the Enterprise engines, it interacted with the interphasic space and threw the ship clear, some distance from the Tholian web.

The impressive technology had the ability to trap a disabled vessel in a web of energy filaments and drag it back to a Tholian base. It worked when two Tholian ships operated in tandem, ‘spinning’ a web – or energy filaments – between their aft sections. They would then weave these lines together, forming an elaborate web around the ship, trapping it inside. This process took a few hours to complete, but once it was finished the ship had no chance of escape.

This data feed of theragen.

The Tholian ships had no compunction about taking violent steps to remove offending craft, and their starships were equipped with various means to accomplish this task. They were armed with energy-beam weapons, similar to phasers, and another more unconventional weapon dubbed the ‘Tholian web.’

As the crew of the Defiant had been driven mad by the effects of interphasic space, so too was the crew of the Enterprise. Chekov was the first to succumb and he was confined to sickbay, but soon there were many other reports of violence among the crew. Eventually, Dr. McCoy managed to synthesize a remedy based around a derivative of theragen.

Loskene’s ship was joined by another Tholian vessel and they began to form another Tholian vessel, and it was then that they temporarily disabled Loskene’s ship. Not long after Loskene’s ship was joined by another Tholian starship, and it was then that they began to spin their energy web around the Enterprise. They had almost completed the task, a few hours later, but just before they finished, the Enterprise managed to recover Kirk. By this point, engineering had managed to restore the Enterprise’s power to 67 percent, and when they brought it online it threw the ship clear of the web and away from the Tholian web.
The U.S.S. Defiant took on a ghostly appearance when it became trapped in an interphasic rift. It was phasing into the Mirror Universe after answering a distress call sent from the Mirror Tholians.

The Mirror Tholians then transmitted a distress call through the rift, and the Defiant responded before becoming trapped. Eventually, the Defiant phased completely into the Mirror Universe, but not before the entire crew had killed each other after having been driven insane by the properties of interphasic space. The Defiant was a century more advanced than the ships in the Mirror Universe, and the Tholians towed it back to one of their bases to harvest its technology.

The crew of the 22nd-century I.S.S. Enterprise learned of this advanced ship being held at a Tholian base, and set out to steal it. An assault team led by the Mirror Jonathan Archer managed to take the Defiant, but in the process the I.S.S. Enterprise was destroyed inside a Tholian web.

Relations between the Federation and the Tholians continued to be fraught well into the 24th century. Starfleet Academy included battle simulations with Tholian starships as late as 2355 for their cadets.

No Tholians were ever seen on screen in the 24th century, but they were mentioned several times on DEEP SPACE NINE. It was also known that a Tholian observer was killed at the Antwerp Conference in 2372 when the Federation and the Romulans met to discuss the growing threat posed by the Dominion.

The sparsity of contact with the Tholians meant that trade with them was scarce. This led to some Tholian products being in very short supply such as Tholian silk, which was highly prized and extremely valuable.

The interphasic region of space that the U.S.S. Defiant NCC-1764 fell into, and which almost claimed the life of Captain Kirk, was created by the Tholians of the Mirror Universe in 2155. They detonated a tri-cobalt warhead inside the gravity well of a dead star. This created the interphasic rift - a tear in space between the Mirror Universe and the Prime Universe.

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The Tholian starship for the remastered edition of ‘The Tholian Web’ was based on the CG Tholian model that appeared in ENTERPRISE. The Tholian starship of the 23rd century was originally designed by Matt Jefferies, the art director and production designer on THE ORIGINAL SERIES. He deliberately kept the concept simple, so the model would be easy and inexpensive to build. Two Tholian studio models were built, and they were mainly made out of balsa wood, with reflective inserts added near the tail. Much of the filming of the models, particularly the sequence where they created the Tholian web that trapped the U.S.S. Enterprise was carried out at Frank van der Veer’s Optical Company. Mike Minor was given the job of creating this effect. He had previously provided many of the wall paintings that were seen on the interior sets of the Enterprise, and he had created a few of the more exotic aliens such as the Melkotian from ‘Spectre of the Gun.’

Minor worked for three or four months on the sequence involving the Tholian web, including storyboarding the 17 cuts of effects that were needed, shooting the raw footage and executing all the animation plates. He based the design of the web on the geometry of a geodesic dome, which gave zig-zag connections. The whole process was complex and time-consuming, but in the end Minor got the shots he needed. After the footage was completed, he was told that the optical bill came in at $90,000, which was over half the cost of the entire production of the episode. It was expensive, but worth it as the image of the Enterprise being encased in a web was really inventive and visually stunning, especially by the standards of special effects in 1968 for TV.

When it came time to create the remastered edition of ‘The Tholian Web’ in 2006, producer Mike Okuda suggested that they create a CG Tholian starship based not on the physical Tholian model designed by Jefferies, but on the 22nd-century Tholian ship that had been created by John Eaves for STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE. The extra money from Toshiba plugged the gap in the funding, but CBS-Digital still had to spend it wisely. Thus, Okuda’s shortcut idea of using the 22nd-century Tholian model from ENTERPRISE as a starting point made sound financial sense. Visual effects supervisor Nel Wray modified John Eaves’s design slightly, so it appeared that the ships had marginally advanced in the intervening years. This solution also had the added benefit of shaving time and money off the demanding schedule and tight budget, while also tying the ships in with some in-universe continuity in a clever way. Maybe not everyone had seen, or would remember, the ENTERPRISE episode that featured the 22nd-century Tholian starships, but the makers of the remastered episode at least knew that their updated design for the 23rd-century Tholian ship made sense – and they did it without spending a fortune.
In 1992, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. featured a very special exhibition, which focused on props, models, and costumes from \textit{STAR TREK: THE ORIGINAL SERIES}. It ran from February 1992 through to January 1993, and was the first official \textit{STAR TREK} exhibit shown anywhere. Although Gene Roddenberry was occasionally known to bring production artifacts from the television series with him to his personal appearances, this was the largest collection of original screen-used props and costumes assembled from \textit{STAR TREK} in history.

The sheer creativity, originality and craftsmanship of the items from \textit{THE ORIGINAL SERIES} have each become icons of popular culture, and any item that was created for the show is now considered a work of art. Given this, it was no surprise that the \textit{STAR TREK} exhibit at the Smithsonian Institute became the most successfully attended event in the history of the museum. Several rare pieces were reunited for the first time since they had been used during filming in the 1960s. The items displayed were acquired from various sources, including the Smithsonian Institute’s own permanent collection, and Paramount Pictures.

**EXPERT GUIDES**

For the occasion, the Smithsonian Institute produced an audio-guided tour that identified each piece featured. In the tour, William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy provided detailed information about costumes and props they once used daily. Among the things you could hear William Shatner discuss were the intricacies of the \textit{STAR TREK} wardrobe, such as the lack of accurate rank braids on his captain’s tunic in the exhibit because they were removed for dry cleaning and weren’t reattached before the series was cancelled.

All of the costumes on display were created by William Ware Theiss, who was the costume designer for both the pilots and the series’ entire three-year run.

One of the costumes on display was a silver spacesuit from the episode ‘The Tholian Web,’ and it had a particularly interesting story behind it. When the director, Ralph Senensky, turned up to start shooting the episode, none of the leading cast were anywhere to be found. They were all off being fitted for their spacesuits. Somehow the production department had failed to make sure that the spacesuits were ready for the beginning of filming. This was a problem because the studio was already concerned about the cost of filming beyond what they had scheduled. Everyone was warned that it should not overrun, and the delay with the spacesuits had already cost half a day. Senensky felt confident that he could make up for the time that was lost, but then the spacesuits caused another problem. Gene Roddenberry had stipulated that he did not want to see zippers,
butons, snaps or hooks on any costume used on STAR TREK, and so to make the spacesuits fit, the actors had to be sewn into the skin-tight costumes. This was all very well, but each time one of the actors needed a bathroom break, he had to be unsewn from the costume and then sewn back in. Of course, these delays only added to the time it was taking to film the episode. Senensky soldiered on, making good time while not compromising on the quality of his work. After the end of the third day of filming Senensky was about half a day behind schedule, which was almost entirely down to the fact that the spacesuits weren’t ready at the beginning and the bathroom delays. Nevertheless, he was called in to see executive producer Fred Freiberger and fired on orders from the studio executives. Apparently, Freiberger hated being asked to do the firing, and Roddenberry was said to be apologetic, angry and sympathetic over how Senensky was treated. Herb Wallerstein, who had no STAR TREK experience, was called in as the replacement director, and he finished the episode on time, which Senensky might have done anyway if he had been given the chance.

DARING OUTFITS

The silver spacesuits certainly caused much drama off camera, but at least they looked better than the red environmental suits that were used in ‘The Naked Time,’ and which were also on display at the Smithsonian Institute in 1992. In fact, all of the garments that were there were carefully displayed on mannequins. This wasn’t always easy, as many of the famously revealing female wardrobe pieces had been literally pinned and/or taped to the actress for the duration of filming, as with Leslie Parrish’s pink toga in ‘Who Mourns For Adonais?’ and Kathie Browne’s Scalosian fashion from ‘Wink of an Eye.’ The costumes displayed ranged from the standard Enterprise duty tunics to fantastic alien fashions, such as several of the pieces that were worn by France Nuyen in ‘Elaan of Troyius.’

It is hard to believe that these costumes were built from a very modest wardrobe budget, proof of Bill Theiss’s innovative genius. His body of work from years in the motion picture industry earned him multiple Academy Award nominations for best costume design. His creations for STAR TREK are his legacy, and his legend continues to grow.

STAR OF THE SHOW

The centerpiece of the exhibit was the original 11-foot shooting miniature of the U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701. This was the larger of the two Enterprise miniatures created for the series. For the exhibition, the model (which had been in the museum’s permanent collection since the mid 1970s) underwent a much-needed restoration that involved electrical repairs and paint touch-ups. This restoration brought the miniature back to its former glory and presented it the way it looked when it was first built in 1965 for ‘The Cage.’ Only the top of the saucer section, and the legendary ‘U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701’ lettering, remained completely untouched. Although this part of the ship was discolored with age, it was decided to leave it in its original state, regardless of the minor ravages of time.

Several other spaceships that were seen during the series were suspended from the ceiling alongside the Enterprise. These included the Galileo shuttlecraft, Khan’s ship the Botany Bay from ‘Space Seed,’ and a D-7 class battlecruiser, which was used by the Klingons and the Romulans.
Among the other models featured in the exhibition was the ship that started out as the Tholian web-spinner. This was designed by Matt Jefferies and built at one of the optical effects houses. It was later modified and reused as the Aurora, the ship stolen and used by Dr. Thomas Wallerstein. The mask was first shot against a curtain of black velvet, but director Herb Wallerstein was not happy with it. He then filmed it against a background of crumpled foil, which gave it an eerie otherworldly look, which he was much happier with and made it into the final cut.

The models of the Enterprise and the Klingon D-7 battlecruiser that were built by Magycam for STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE were also on display, but these were the only pieces that were built after the original television series was cancelled.

ADAPTED AND REUSED

With the exception of a small handful of items, the collection of hand props at the Smithsonian Institute represented everything of this nature that was known to still exist. The oldest piece in the exhibit was one of the laser pistols designed and constructed by the legendary Wah Chang for the first pilot episode, “The Cage.” This particular laser was modified and used in two later episodes, “The Man Trap” and “What Are Little Girls Made Of?” In the latter episode, the flip-up sight was removed and several other details were added, including vintage typewriter keys to the side of the main body. There was also one non-functioning “type-2 phaser,” which was displayed along with a phaser belt. Two designs of belt were used in the series, and this was the earlier version. Both styles were retired when Velcro strips were incorporated onto the uniform trousers.

The “type-2 phaser” on display was seen in the first five or six episodes, and featured a black and white color scheme. This early design of phaser lacks several of the details which STAR TREK fans are most familiar with, and the power-setting wheel, indicator gauge, and sight grille are noticeably different than those on the phasers that were used in most episodes.

Two examples of the “type-1 phaser” were also on display – one black version and one blue/grey version. Both these phasers lacked the functioning lights seen on the hero props used for close-up work. Finishing out this display case was a power pack handle, which was built and used in the episode “The Omega Glory.”

Another display case contained several items that were used regularly, including Dr. McCoy’s medical field kit with hypnospray and the medical scanner. Other items included a non-functioning communicator and tricorder, several assorted colored computer chips, a turbo elevator handle, an intercom speaker, and a 23rd-century stylus (which Kirk used to sign the reports his yeoman handed him). Two non-Starfleet pieces were also in his display case: the ahn-woon from “Amok Time,” and a piece of Vian technology that was featured in “The Empath.”

ADAPTED AND REUSED

The alien weaponry on STAR TREK was designed by Matt Jefferies. Two examples of the imaginative pieces he created were the mortae from ‘The Cloud Minders’ and the kligat from ‘Friday’s Child,’ which was designed to be used in a similar way to a ninja throwing star. The kligat in the exhibit still retained its flying rigging, an example of special effects supervisor Jim Rugg’s handiwork.

Two pieces were featured from the extremely popular episode ‘Mirror, Mirror’: the agonizer (which was reused in ‘Day of the Dove’ as a Klingon torture device) and an Empire standard-issue dagger and its scabbard.

Alien life forms were represented by a half-dozen tribbles and a single-celled parasite creature from ‘Operation: Annihilate!’ Recycling pieces between props was an effective way to save time and money. One of the first alien lifeforms that appeared in STAR TREK was built for the episode A Taste of Armageddon. ‘The Eminiar VII sonic disruptor’s main body was then reused by various different cultures. With some modifications, it became the Klingon disruptor. The front five-pronged fork emitters of the Eminiar VII weapons were removed, and a new emitter was designed. The now discarded, highly stylized items were then reused several times as other pieces of equipment, including one of Dr. McCoy’s medical tools. Three of these emitters were permanently incorporated into the design of an engineering tool seen in several episodes, including “Metamorphosis.”

The Smithsonian Exhibit was a resounding success, which recognized the cultural significance of STAR TREK. It received plenty of media coverage, and so many people turned up to view the exhibit that tickets had to be issued to control the influx. It was proof, as it proved, of STAR TREK’s enduring popularity.
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- How designer John Eaves designed a new type of ship for the Borg
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ON SCREEN

KEY APPEARANCES

STAR TREK: THE ORIGINAL SERIES

‘The Tholian Web’

The U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701 is searching for the U.S.S. Defiant NCC-1764, which has been missing for three weeks. Sensors reveal that the fabric of space they are in is in flux when they spot the ghostly image of the Defiant.

A boarding party beams over to the Defiant where they find that the entire crew is dead, having apparently killed each other in a murderous rage. They also discover that the entire ship is phasing in and out of existence.

The boarding party beam back to the Enterprise, but a transporter problem means Captain Kirk is left behind. The Defiant then disappears taking Kirk with it. Spock determines that it is stuck in an interphasic rift, which has formed a portal to another dimension.

Spock calculates that the Defiant will reappear, but as they wait a Tholian starship arrives and demands that they leave. When the Defiant fails to return, the Tholian starship attacks and disables the Enterprise. Another Tholian starship arrives and they start to weave an energy web around the Enterprise. Spock refuses to leave and must find a way to retrieve his captain before the Tholians complete their web and his crew succumb to the same violent malady that befell the Defiant.

There is some debate as to whether ‘The Tholian Web’ won an Emmy for its optical effects. Certainly, Marc Cushman’s excellent book These Are The Voyages about THE ORIGINAL SERIES states that it did win, but the ceremony was private and not televised, which has led to the confusion.

FIRST APPEARANCE:

THE THOLIAN WEB (TOS)

TV APPEARANCE:

STAR TREK: THE ORIGINAL SERIES

DESIGNED BY:

John Eaves and updated by Mike Okuda

TRIVIA

‘The Tholian Web’ was written by two first-time screenwriters, Judy Burns and Chet Richards, who were only in their early 20s when they sold their script. Burns was a fan of the show and decided to write an episode because she had heard that they paid $2,500 for a script and that was the exact amount she needed to go to Africa to work with anthropologist Louis Leakey. Burns went on to have a very successful career as a TV writer working on shows such as Mission: Impossible, T.J. Hooker and MacGyver.

Actress Barbara Babcock provided the voice of Loskene – the Tholian in the episode. She also lent her voice to other characters in the show such as Lister’s mother in ‘The Pursuit of happiness.’ She appeared in front of the camera as Mea 3 in the episode ‘A Taste of Armageddon and as Phyllis (picture below) in ‘Tristan’s Story.’

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