The Designer's Story:
Filmmaking from the Perspective of the Production Designer

Jane Barnwell

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Abstract

The production designer is the person responsible for the overall look of a film, working in close collaboration with the director, producer and director of photography. They create the environment and visual style for the story to take place in. As head of the art department they oversee the realization of their designs creating real and imagined worlds for the screen. The deployment of screen space is often physically and emotionally essential in order to underpin the concepts of character and narrative.

Drawing widely upon the production designer's professional perspective and particular creative point of view, the corpus of work comprising this submission has generated a new method of analysis deriving from five distinct categories that the designer employs to visualize the script.

This submission consists of a combination of written publications and a feature length film that exemplify the professional practice of a production designer. To accompany the film, evidence is included in the form of pre-production paperwork that details the research and design process. Together the written and practical work provide an overview of the subject of production design through the lens of a professional practitioner.

Submissions – consisting of a body of writing, and a film with accompanying pre-production illustrating my process.

A: Monographs

1. *Production Design for Screen. Visual Storytelling in Film and Television*, Bloomsbury publishing, March 2017 (ISBN 978-1-4725-8067-2) 224 pp.60,000 words.

Summary: The book offers a new methodology for evaluating the designer's work through the five categories of analysis: space, in and out, light, colour and set decoration. It features interviews and case studies with Production Designers (PDs) and interpretative commentary that frames and reflects on the practice.

2. *Production Design: Architects of The Screen.* Wallflower Press, 2004 (ISBN 1-903364-55-8) 135 pp. 40,000 words

Summary: The book explores the role of the Production Designer through a historical overview that maps out landmark screen designs. The chapters work through the historical evolution of the role and what it consists of in the contemporary film landscape, before moving on to consider the construction of place and time on screen and the way these are distilled to create environments that appear authentic, but are, in fact, poetic distillations.

B: Dialogues/Interventions

1. Article 'Spies at Home – the role of the domestic interior in *Tinker Tailor Soldier, Spy* (2011, Tomas Alfredson, PD Maria Djurkovic).' *Kosmorama journal*, June 2017.

Drawing on interviews with the PD Maria Djurkovic and the Set Decorator Tatiana MacDonald the design of the domestic interiors in the film are considered. Using the Visual Concept model (outlined in ref monograph A1) as a method of analysis the design of the home is identified as key to understanding the complex narrative of the film.

2. Article 'Between Realism and Visual Concept: The role of the production designer in contemporary British cinema.' *The Journal of British Cinema and Television,* May 2005 (ISSN 17434521) pp117-129, 13 pp.) Production Designer

Christopher Hobbs is used as a case study to illustrate the tension that exists between effectively visualizing the script for the screen and issues of realism and authenticity.

3. 'Interview: Stuart Craig' *Widescreen Journal*, Vol 1, Issue 2 (ISSN 1757 3920) June, 2010. 6pp. An interview that elaborates on Craig's approach to design and striving for the "poetic truth".

4. Interview 'An Air of Realism.' Discussion of the work of Production Designer Peter Lamont. *The Scenographer***,** *International Journal of Production & Costume Design*.   (ISSN 1722- 6694) (Nov 2007). Pp34-47 (14 pp.) An interview that considers Peter Lamont's work and identifies the importance he places on realism as a driving force in his design.

C: Processes

Film, *Axed* (2012, Dir. Ryan Driscoll, Production Design Jane Barnwell) feature film, 1 hour 24 minutes, psychological thriller genre, distributed by Lionsgate Entertainment. (Winner Best Screenplay, Bram Stoker Film Festival, 2012.) This includes the production notes and sketchbook charting the film's progress from pre-production to post, illustrating the influence of the designer and the points of collaboration and workflow between other heads of department. (Available on DVD and online)

Acknowledgments

Author's Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

Introduction

In May 2005 *The Journal of British Cinema and Television* published a volume dedicated to Visual Style, which included a range of academics considering ways of analyzing film design. In this, Sue Harper and Vincent Porter make the point: "The failure of media historians to address issues of visual style may lie in part with the difficulty in finding an appropriate verbal language with which to discuss it. The truth of the matter, however is that in order to appreciate the visual style of a film the scholar probably requires not merely the analytical abilities of the historian but also the visual eye of the painter or photographer and the structural sensibility of the architect." [1]

This quote acknowledges the difficulty surrounding the study of the subject and points to the absence of an appropriate language with which to discuss it. This may be partly due to the lack of visibility of the production designer and their work, which is at the service of the script and as such tied to notions of remaining in the background. It is the production designer's job to interpret the script for the screen and weave the visual elements together to create a coherent fictional universe. [2] However their role constitutes a paradox in the tension that exists between the visible setting and invisibility of their art. Effective design is often so integrated that it does not draw the attention of the viewer as it appears so naturally at ease with the characters and narrative. Recurring issues in debates around production design include those of authorship, *mise en scène*, realism[3] and authenticity, which identify the tension

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[1] Harper S and Porter V, 2005: 15

[2] In early cinema the role of the designer was not fully acknowledged. The title technical director was replaced with interior decorator then art director. In 1939 the new title of production designer was invented to acknowledge the contribution of William Cameron Menzies on *Gone With The Wind.* The art director previously the head of the art department is now the person working directly for the production designer. The art director effectively project manages the art department, they oversee the drawing up of plans by the drafting department during pre-production and construction and set decoration during production.

[3] Realism is a problematic term in film studies that is often referred to by PDs as one of their key concerns, thus for the purposes of this essay it should be understood as the drive to create believable sets in the context of the production. German theorist Siegfried Kracauer considered cinema ideally placed to reproduce physical reality. ' A film is realistic because it correctly reproduces the part of the real world to which it refers.' (Kracauer 'Theory of Film: the redemption of physical reality.') Formalists such as Sergei Eisenstein and Rudolf Arnheim on the other hand, argued that film cannot

that exists between the need for a degree of realism and the drive for a dramatic screen environment.[4] Wherever a design sits stylistically on the scale of realism/expressionism it adheres to the objectives of visual storytelling, which revolve around building a visual concept. My contribution to the conversation stems from a practitioner's point of view and an understanding of the process of interpreting and collaborating on the way a script is realized for the screen. [5]

My work straddles the fields of film theory and practice, disciplines which often bear little relation to each other. Whether using my own films or the work of other production designers, practice is at the heart of the discussion. I propose that earlier film theories have failed to understand the role of the production designer, and identify writing focusing on design that presents useful perspectives for study and informs the generation of my own distinctive analytical model. My examination of production design aims to move the debate forward in significant ways by presenting a comprehensive model with which to navigate the subject area.

The work in this submission represents my journey from filmmaker to film academic. The aim of this piece of writing is to develop a synthesis of my theory and practice, drawing upon in-depth and sustained research into the production designer's practice and contribution. In doing so, the submissions highlight the connections that my work makes across formal categories that are often distinct and separate. The aim of my research has been to establish a new approach to

capture reality accurately and that is what makes it worthy as a form of art. Proponents of realism tried to retain real time and space, while formalists manipulated it to remind the audience that what they are watching is not real but a constructed representation.

[4] 'I think design has very little realism. I think documentaries are about realism and feature films are about drama so it's a highly selective truth. You come at the truth by being stylized and it's a poetic truth.' Stuart Craig, author interview 2000

[5] Practitioners who have published reflections on production design include; British PD, Edward Carrick wrote 'Designing for Moving Pictures' (1941) and 'Art and Design in the British Film: A Pictorial Directory of British Art Directors and their Work. (1948) French PD, Leon Barsacq wrote 'Caligari's Cabinet and other Grand Illusions.' (1976) As a PD Barsacq reflects on the art of production design and develops the notion of the set as a character. More recently, PD Peter Lamont, has published 'The Man with The Golden Eye: Designing the James Bond films.' (2016) and Art Director, Terry Ackland Snow 'The Art of Illusion' 2017.

understanding film production design. Stimulated by practice-informed interpretation, it critically analyses an area of film that has been previously appropriated by broad theories that do not effectively acknowledge the collaborative nature of filmmaking; such broad theories have, for example, often sought to allocate authorship to a single figure.[6]

In my writing I have identified the ways that the production designer (PD) is engaged in activity often ascribed to the director and have indicated the lack of popular understanding around the filmmaking process. In fact, the director and PD roles are hugely collaborative.[7] In a close working relationship, the boundaries between the creative contributions of individuals are often blurred. When this alliance is successful it often results in collaborations across many projects, as I identify in my recent book *Production Design for Screen. Visual Storytelling in Film and Television*. [8]

The practical dimension of the role is considered in each of the books (A1 and A2) where there is a chapter devoted to the production process and the importance of budget and schedule are identified as fundamental to realizing effective designs on screen. The case studies of PDs Stuart Craig and Peter Lamont (B3 and B4) also examine many practical elements of the craft. These two interviews exemplify the tension that exists in any production design project between realism and visual concept. Whereby, Peter Lamont aligns himself with realism and Stuart Craig strives for what he terms 'poetic truth'.

The broader context of the history of production design was part of the focus in my first book, *Production Design: Architects of the Screen* (Wallflower Press,

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[6] Flawed concepts of film authorship were introduced by Astruc, 1948, Sarris 1962, Wollen, 1969. And those notions have become entrenched and continue today Gerstner and Stagier 2003, Caughie 2007. Despite some opposing voices Kael 1963, Perkins 1972, Carringer 1985.

[7] David O Selznick invented the term 'production designer' in 1939 to acknowledge the work of William Cameron Menzies on *Gone with the Wind*. This new title indicated a fundamental contribution to the planning of a film. Barnwell J, 2004: 13

[8] Barnwell J, 2017:26

2004) (A2) and the article 'Between Realism and Visual Concept: the Role of the Production Designer in Contemporary British Cinema.' (2005) (B2). The origins and the ways in which the craft and the role developed through different stages of cinema history are addressed. These discussions include reference to the formation of the Art Directors' Guild and the different attempts to bring the PD to the fore – for professional acknowledgment and greater understanding.

The process underlying my professional development presented in this submission has involved designing and making films, interviewing PDs, analysing existing texts, and addressing film and production design theory in particular. The place where these practices intersect is where I locate my work and is the source of the model that I propose as central to my original contribution to knowledge.

My work is unified by an investigation into the construction of screen environments. By theorising around this subject, I have been able to explore the ways in which the PD contributes to key elements of the fabric of film – narrative, character and atmosphere. Not seeking to install the PD as an alternative or even rival auteur [9] the purpose is to open up debate on the genesis of the cinematic image, allowing a deeper appreciation of its construction, in turn enabling an enriched understanding of workflow and collaboration in filmmaking. By using the same method of analysis on my own designs and the PDs interviewed, I have been able to develop a framework that can be applied to the reading of film. Looking at the object of study from these two perspectives has resulted in a method that can be transported between the fields of theory and practice.

During the period in which the submitted works were produced I have been investigating the nature of production design with a consistent and sustained focus upon several research questions:

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[9]
Auteur - The literary notion of a single author that has dominated writing on film.

1) How does the work of the PD impact on the screen image?

2) In what ways can such impact be identified?

3) How does the recognition of the PD's visual signature impact on earlier film theories of authorship?

4) How can investigation into production design enhance understanding of narrative, character and atmosphere within a film?

5) In what ways do my own designs represent an embodiment of my approach to the analysis of production design?

The Visual Concept Methodology

I have been developing a methodology called Visual Concept Analysis since the year 2000. This culminated in 2017 in the book, *Production Design for Screen: Visual Storytelling in Film and Television,* (to be abbreviated to *Production Design for Screen* from this point on) which investigates the production design of screen images. The book progressed through the cycle of my research, whereby I would conduct several interviews with PDs then reflect on the findings and map the similarities between the approaches. This cycle continued through the subsequent conference papers and articles I have written (2005-2017), where the material was refined and developed further. This addresses questions 1 and 2 of my research questions above.

In summary, the Visual Concept is first established by the PD, in order to visualize any particular project - defined through close scrutiny of the script and related research. Once established the PD constructs a visual contrast to ensure the concept is clear, this then usually transforms through the course of the film, often reflecting the protagonist's journey. [10]

The Visual Concept Analysis works through the five distinct categories that the PD employs to visualize the script:

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[10] Barnwell J, 2017: 57 – 81

     i)   *Space*

     ii) *In and Out (boundaries and transitions)*

     iii) *Light*

     iv) *Colour*

     v) *Set Decoration*

Through the strategic use of these five categories the visual story is told. Every decision about the five elements is linked and returns to the logic of the central Visual Concept driving the design. Examples of Visual Concepts are explored in *Production Design for Screen*, including the labyrinth of *The Shining* (1980), the physical distance in *Closer* (2004), the liminal space of *The Terminal* (2004), conflict between journalistic endeavour and corporate finance in *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005) and home as fractured personality in *Fight Club* (1999)*.* This approach differs from *mise en scène* theory, which is also concerned with the visual style of a film, in two key ways.

Firstly, the initial proponents of *mise en scène* theory considered the director the key author of a film. These included the French critics and later filmmakers, Jean Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, who together formed the journal *Cahiers du Cinema* during the 1950s. [11] In spite of the more recent scholarly activity in film studies that rethink authorship and consider other sources of creativity other than the director, the *Cahier du Cinema* perspective of auteurism is still relevant because it continues to impact on how film authorship is perceived by audiences and academics.

For example as Charles Tashiro points out, the notion of auteurism as an ideology has hardly ceased. Directors' names are still used to promote films. And yet clearly we are no longer in a period of directorial dominance.[12]

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[11] 'The development of 'la politique des auteurs' into a cult of personality gathers strength with the emergence of Andrew Sarris, who pushes to extremes arguments which in Cahiers were often only implicit. (Buscombe, 1973: 79a)

[12] Tashiro. C, in Fischer. L 2015: 97

Often *mise en scène* analysis [13] fails to recognize the filmmaking process in general and the role of the production designer in particular in visualizing the script in the first place.

Secondly, the term *mise en scène* refers to the contents of the frame and the way they are organized - everything that appears before the camera, including; light, costume, colour, décor, props, space, action and performance. The framing and interaction of these elements in relation to the camera is analysed to produce a textual analysis of the visual style of a production. The notion of *mise en scène* in relation to auteur theory tends to suggest that the director is responsible for all of these elements.

'*mise en scène* is intimately connected to arguments about why the director, rather than the scriptwriter, should be considered the artist responsible for a film.' [14]

This interpretation relies on the misunderstanding that the director is responsible for all of these areas. These ideas spread to Britain in the early 1960s and were notably explored in the journal *Movie*. Film historians have had a part to play in wrongly conveying the sense that the director is the author of the visual style by perpetuating the primary focus on the director and making the contribution of others subordinate. [15] *Mise en scène* is a key idea in film and screen studies that in spite of its uses in the description and analysis of visual style, has promoted misunderstanding and failed to recognize the role of the production designer and other key personnel in visualizing the script. [16]As Raymond Durgnat commented,

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[13] '*mise en scène* is sometimes used as a straightforward descriptive term but it is really a concept, complicated but central to a developed understanding of film.' (Gibbs. J 2002:1)

[14] Gibbs. J 2002: 55

[15] As per earlier list under footnote 3

[16] The concept of *mise en scène* has recently been applied effectively to the area of interior design by Jean Whitehead in, *Creating Interior Atmosphere: mise en scène and interior design.* (2017)

'Many films bear the marks of several auteurs but a good film is always a subtle balance of creative energies and ascendancies' [17]

Visual Concept Analysis builds on *mise en scène* theory in that it textually analyses the image but differs in that it identifies key areas that the PD is responsible for and separates these out for further scrutiny from the larger grouping of elements implied by *mise en scène*. It is distinct in that it uses the five strands of space, in and out, light, colour and set decoration in order to comprehend the practical and conceptual solutions the PD has employed to design problems posed by the script.

Through PD interviews carried out since 2000, my research illustrates the fundamental contribution of the PD to notions usually folded into *mise en scène* that have been routinely attributed to the director. There are comparisons in the neglect of other heads of department who are also key collaborators, for example the director of photography [18] or costume designer. Costume designer and academic Deborah Landis's work on costume identifies a parallel absence and suggests theorists do not acknowledge the costume designer as interpreter of the script, claiming that few of the non-designer authors understand what film costume design actually is. [19] Landis points out that the theoretical books on the subject ignore the role of the designer and concentrate on the isolated meaning of film costume. Not taking the practice into account fails to do academic justice to the subject and results in these works feeding upon themselves and undermining an understanding of practice in relation to theory, argues Landis. The point being made by Landis is that the costume is being considered without taking into account the role of the costume designer and their contribution to the creation of character understanding, narrative meaning and emotional nuance in a film. The absence of the costume designer in an academic analysis

[17] Durgnat, R 1967: 77-78

[18] Petrie, D. *The British Cinematographer*, 1996

Sterling, A, K. *Cinematographers on the Art and Craft of Cinematography*, 1987

[19] Landis, D. *Scene and not heard: The role of costume in the cinematic storytelling process*. Volume I, June 2003.

of costume is identified as problematic by Landis, who attempts to redress the balance in her work which follows the design process to the final film image.

My goal is similar to Landis's in that I wish to present a clear and more representative picture of the role of the PD. The case studies I have undertaken illustrate the PD's purpose and the process of design for the screen. Although each designer embodies an individual approach to their craft, they follow a similar creative process, seeking a visual concept and finding ways to visualize it on screen. [20] Their responses to the script will vary enormously depending on their background and influences. The interviews featured at the end of each chapter of *Production Design for Screen* illustrate that each PD works differently with the five categories but the structure remains essentially the same. Every decision is linked and returns to the logic of the central concept or as PD Jim Bissell terms it 'the big idea'.

'Every time you think about the way it looked, sounded, the way the characters did what they did it keeps pointing back to the narrative, it keeps redirecting you.' [21]

Visual Concept Analysis is the model used to evaluate film design in my publications, for example there is a chapter devoted to each of the five categories in the book *Production Design for Screen,* which include reference to several films. Another extended example is in my article 'Spies at Home: How the Design of the domestic interior in *Tinker Tailor Soldier, Spy* conveys character and narrative. (*Kosmorama*, 16 June 2017). In the article, I work through the five points of my model specifically in relation to the film *Tinker Tailor Soldier, Spy* (2011) and examine the way the homes of the key characters reveal personality and reflect the background and motivation of narrative as it unfolds. The home is designed to accentuate the theme of espionage through the use of the *In and*

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[20] The common process is discussed in chapter 1 of *Production Design for Screen.*

[21] Jim Bissell, author interview, 2016

Out category in particular, where boundaries between public and private space are transgressed.

Literature review

The existing literature on production design reveals a limited understanding of the subject, with a distinct division between the practical books and the theoretical ones. There is very little crossover between these resulting in a lack of critical work relating the process and the end product in any meaningful way. General film theory books have a tendency to discuss 'visual style' and *mise en scène* without including or elaborating on the PD. This perpetuates the lack of visibility of the PD. This literature review addresses my research question 'How does the recognition of the PD's visual signature impact on earlier film theories of authorship?'

Film theory has had a problematic relationship with production design, as illustrated in the views of French film theorist André Bazin [22] who considered set design as un-cinematic. Bazin views Expressionist set design as failing because it is not representing a plausible reality. [23] These debates can also be traced to insecurity among filmmakers and critics about the status of film as an art form. Attempts to define film as art included 'La politique des auteurs' [24] proposing a model which included the claim that cinema was equivalent to other art forms in depth and meaning, constituted through a new and unique language. Out of this came the notion of the director's visual signature - identifiable techniques that formed part of a great director's screen vocabulary. Although film theorists have subsequently acknowledged that filmmaking is a collective activity, it is the director they claim who makes the choices concerning, for example, framing, *mise en scène*, camera position and movement.

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[22] Co-founder of the journal *Cahier du Cinema* (1951) and author of *What is Cinema?* Vol 1 & 2 1967 - 71

[23] Bazin, A. *What Is Cinema?* Vol. I: 108

[24] Truffaut, F. *Une Certain Tendance du cinema Francais,* 1954

André Bazin described *mise en scène* as emphasizing choreographed movement within a scene rather than through editing. My designer interviews provide evidence of the PD's role as crucial in defining movement.[25] In addition to this movement within scenes, production design is concerned with the building of a visual concept across a film. So the design aspects have been given a temporary home in another area of theory – *mise en scène* employed by an *auteur*. But if we refer back to the filmmaking process, the role of the PD is clearly one of visualising the script in the first instance and understanding that can help us to unpick aspects of design from the limitations of *mise en scène* theory.

Since the early foundations of Bazin and film studies since, theory has continued to have a problematic relationship with production design. As film academics Bergfelder, Harris and Street note neither 1970s post-Structuralism nor the 'new film history' have resulted in any increased focus upon, or understanding of, set design. This, they consider, is partly due to the fact that new film history doesn't possess the necessary vocabulary to understand the topic's textuality, and partly because the textuality is beyond the domain of narrative. [26] Their work indicates the need to conceptualise the designer as a significant stylistic force within the collaborative context of filmmaking [27] and signals the need for further evidence to dismantle the notion of the director as singular creative author. Again, my research has sought to more adequately locate the PD's contribution as a vital one amongst a matrix of influences.

> '…set design is one of the central aspects of *mise en scène* whether using (and then frequently enhancing) real locations or creating entirely artificial, and in recent years increasingly virtual spaces for the screen.' [28]

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[25] For example in Barnwell 2017, PDs Hugo Wyhowski: 84 and Gemma Jackson: 106

[26] Bergfelder, T, Harris, S and Street, S. 2007: 18

[27] ibid: 27

[28] ibid: 11

As Sarah Street usefully points out, production design is a specific expertise requiring understanding in terms that depart from conventional *mise en scène* analysis and theories of authorship, including codes of professionalism, economic constraints and particular studio contexts of production. [29] However, as we have seen, much of the designer's contribution is absorbed by *mise en scène*, which poses problems that reduce and limit understanding of both the film image and the role of the designer. That is to say the work of the designer is not appropriately attributed to them rendering their input invisible. This not only detracts from an understanding of production design but the wider appreciation and understanding of film is also weaker as a result.

For example, conventional *mise en scène* analysis would involve the contents of the frame and the way in which they are organized. This would include lighting, costume, colour, props, décor, action, performance, space, camera position and framing. As Gibbs says, 'It is important to consider each element's potential for expression. But it is worth remembering from the outset that these elements are most productively thought of in terms of their interaction rather than individually – in practice, it is the interplay of elements that is significant.' [30] This is helpful in analysing the production of meaning in a film, however problematic in relation to appreciating the role of the production designer in the creation of these. For example, Gibbs' detailed case study of *Imitation of Life* (1959) refers to the director Douglas Sirk and the cinematographer Russell Metty but there is no mention of the production designers, Alexander Golitzen or Richard H. Riedel.[31]

My work unpicks key elements that the PD has been responsible for (space, in and out, light, colour and set decoration) in order that we might see their contribution where it has previously been overlooked.

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[29] Street, S. 2005: 21
[30] Gibbs, J. 2002: 26.
[31] Gibbs, J. 2002: 83-96 for a conventional *mise en scène* analysis of *Imitation of Life*

Laurie Ede's *History of British Film Design* (2010) stresses the need to side step 'hollow auteurism', as he terms it, pointing out that designers are not autonomous artists but workers participating in an industrial process of production. [32] In my research, I too aim to avoid the pitfalls of pinning authorship on any one member of the team - my model rests on the understanding that film is a process of participation.

Charles and Mirella Joan Affron's *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (1995) looked at the different ways a setting can function in degrees of narrativity, devising criteria for determining the extent to which a set engages with narrative. This is a detailed text that theorizes the scenic and visual elements of film. The authors put forward five main analytical categories in set design; 1) denotation, 2) punctuation, 3) embellishment, 4) artifice and 5) narrative. The categories move from the setting as invisible functional background to playing an increasingly active part. Set as artifice, for example, dominates and draws attention to its own fabrication, while set as narrative coheres to the extent that the setting is fundamental to story and character. This is an interesting and useful model that moves from invisible background settings to spectacles that intervene and draw attention to their construction. The book establishes a useful approach but is ultimately a fixed and very specific way of considering the design elements of a production that is not always easily applicable.

Charles Tashiro, (1998) *Pretty Pictures: Production design and the History of Film* takes the theories of Norberg-Schulz [33] and extends them to apply to film. The book historicizes mid-to-late twentieth century film through this extension of existential architectural space. Tashiro criticized the Affrons for their primary concern with narrative. He writes that objects can have meanings of their own that have nothing to do with the script. He makes a case for studying design as something that is greater than the framed narrativised image and introduces an

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[32] Ede, L. 2010: 37

[33] Norwegian architect and theorist

approach based on an audience's emotional engagement with spatial cues on screen. He suggests we think about how the demands of film narrative cannot always contain the effects of film design.

The work of individual contemporary PDs is examined in *Production Design & Art Direction* (Ettedgui, Peter ed 1999) and the films of Ken Adam are reviewed in *Moonraker, Strangelove and other celluloid dreams: the visionary art of Ken Adam* (Sylvester, David, 2000) and again in Christopher Frayling's *Ken Adam and The Art of Production Design* (2005) and *Ken Adam Designs The Movies: James Bond and Beyond* (2008). Ian Christie's 2008 book analyses the work of designer John Box in *The Art of Film: John Box and Production Design*, which provides a wealth of information and historical context for the films produced.

These texts open up the area and deliver solid insight into a range of PDs in terms of filmographies and working practices of specific designers framed within the context of production. This body of work can be built on using a model such as the one I propose, which furthers understanding of the ways in which the conceptual process of designing results in the images we subsequently see on the screen. Enhancing and making visible the underpinning elements that are at work across the production design of a film in a universal sense.

Film academic Ben McCann's article proposes 'action space' based on the notion that certain spaces embody conflict, both narrative and emotional, becoming a structuring metaphor in the differentiation of people and places in film. [34] As McCann says, 'décor is never a silent shell – detached from the action'. I propose it is the ways in which décor influences our reading of a film that have been argued over.[35]

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[34] McCann, B. 'A Discreet Character? Action spaces and architectural specificity in French poetic realist cinema' *Screen* 2004: 376

[35] As early as the 1930s architect and filmmaker Robert Mallet Stevens studied the role of film settings, 'A film set, in order to be a good set must act. Whether realistic or expressionist, modern or ancient, it must play its part.' (in Barsacq: 125)

McCann makes the point that decor 'speaks', paraphrasing the narrative's concerns and architecturally reflecting the emotions and mental states of the individuals inhabiting them. [36] My work extends this notion by categorizing the visual metaphors that convey the concepts underpinning narrative - character and emotion. McCann's notion of 'action spaces' overlaps with one of my categories, the *In and Out*, which is concerned with how characters enter and exit settings and the way interior and exterior settings relate to each other.

Art Direction & Production Design (ed. Lucy Fischer, IB Tauris, 2015) works through key periods in film history from the silent era to contemporary practice. It is a useful addition to an understanding of the history of the subject including key figures, design styles, studios and technology. [37]

These works indicate growing interest in the subject and recognize the PD as a key collaborator who contributes to the production of meaning in a film.

Research Path

Methodologically, the submitted works integrate theory and practice, reflecting my career path. Extensive interviews with PDs have formed one element of primary research towards the books and articles. [38] The other key element of primary research has been my own practice in film design, as I have analysed the process in relation to key theories in film and production design. This has created a different vantage point compared with interviewing other PDs about their practice. The two methods in combination offer insight into the subject area

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[36] McCann, B: 375

[37] Fischer L, 2015: 9 refers to my first book *Production Design: Architects of the Screen* 2004: 45- 79 as a model for usefully understanding the process and workflow of the art department. Fischer says I define and examine each stage of production and states that her elaboration on the process is partially borrowed from my work.

[38] PDs and how they relate to each submission

The first book (A2) drew on interviews with PDs; Malcolm Thornton, Stuart Craig, Kave Quinn and Christopher Hobbs.

The article (B2) disseminates material from the interview with Christopher Hobbs and the article (B1) uses interviews with PD Maria Djurkovic and Set Decorator Tatiana Macdonald as evidence.

The article (B3) Stuart Craig and article (B4) Peter Lamont.

The book (A1) uses interviews with Martin Childs, Jim Clay, Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski, Gemma Jackson, Moira Tait, Alex McDowell, Jim Bissell, Ronald Gow, Stuart Craig, Mimi Gramatky, Tatiana Macdonald and Anna Pritchard.

where theory and practice overlap. The repetition of key concerns across the two methods (my process and other PDs' processes) formed the basis of my approach and model. The model provides a way of investigating the PD's impact on a film and can be used to identify aspects of their creative presence.

When I embarked on writing my first book *Production Design: Architects of the Screen* (2004), it was in response to the lack of material available on the subject at the time. I studied production design at film school (1990-92)[39] and I learnt from watching, discussing and making films, however in relation to scholarly work on the subject there was a distinct absence of material to draw on. [40] Thus I began interviewing production designers during the late 1990s, gaining insight and compiling my own personal catalogue on the subject.[41]

One of my early interviews was with Christopher Hobbs [42] in 2000. Luckily, Christopher had a whole morning free so we sat in his kitchen drinking coffee for several hours all recorded on a small analogue Dictaphone. Several tapes full of material later, I finally left him alone and began to piece together the conversation in some sort of meaningful way. The aims and objectives for the interview were to get Christopher to be explicit about what he was trying to do, how he did it and whether it worked or not in relation to specific projects. More widely, I was searching for clues to his approach and underpinning philosophy, if one existed and if it did, what it was and how it might be defined. Hobbs had a highly distinctive and invigorating honesty around key issues such as realism, authenticity, historical accuracy and the production process. His insights were thrilling, I'd never heard anyone speak so candidly about the filmmaking process or the art department before.

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[39] At the Northern School of Film & TV, now known as the Northern Film School

[40] I recall turning to James Monaco, *How To Read A Film,* 1977 for a definition, 'The designer in charge of sets and costumes and sometimes a major contributor to a film.'

[41] Appendix 1 for list of interviewees and filmographies

[42] *Gormenghast* (2000), *Mansfield Park* (1999), *Velvet Goldmine* (1998), *Long Day Closes* (1992), *Edward II* (1991), *The Last of England* (1987), *Caravaggio* (1986).

The contribution to the journal – 'Between Realism and Visual Concept: the Role of the Production Designer in Contemporary British Cinema' disseminates some of my research with PDs with particular focus on the work of Christopher Hobbs. Laurie Ede notes in his book *British Film Design: A History* that my work helps demonstrate Hobbs' working practices effectively. [43]

After this I conducted several more interviews during the period 2000-2004 when I set about contacting PDs of films I found engaging and in most instances, was able to arrange an interview to discuss their work with them. The study sample for the interviews was chosen in relation to the designers I had access to, thus the majority belong to British cinema between the years 1980-2017. The interviewees participated on a voluntary basis without any remuneration. Interviews were conducted either in person or by phone/Skype and recorded, then transcribed. When interviewing the participants the setting can make a difference to how the conversation flows and how much depth and coherence results. The majority of my interviews take place in the homes of the PDs, which is often ideal as they feel comfortable and there is no sense of being overheard or interrupted. They are at ease in their own surroundings, which often results in very candid and lengthy discussions that go on for several hours. The interviews capture a process that is often otherwise lost from record, so conducting, transcribing and making available the practitioner's accounts and reflections is a valuable exercise in itself.

On some occasions I have conducted interviews on set, for example, where a particular designer is working at Shepperton or Pinewood studios. This provides a different context as they are very much at work and in the mode of the job. They may be overheard and are less likely to discuss anything that they wouldn't want another member of the crew hearing. Having said this, it provides wonderful context to the discussion to see the set being constructed and look at models and drawings in process - the art department in action. So there are

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[43] Ede, L. 2010: 164

definite advantages and disadvantages to this. I have interviewed some PDs several times. Stuart Craig, for example, I visited for the first time in his home in Windsor (2000) and have subsequently visited him at Leavesden Studios, once for the *Harry Potter* series (2004) and once for *Tarzan* (2014). This is ideal as it has allowed me to build up a really good sense of Craig's working methods, approach and sensibility in general.

At home or on set can both be excellent places for interviews to take place. Interviews have also been conducted via Skype when PDs are in another country – this was the case with Alex McDowell and Jim Bissell who are both in the United States. Although I was concerned that I would not be able to achieve the same sense of rapport as a face-to-face meeting, these went really well. I was relieved to find that we managed to gain a flow to the conversation with a degree of trust, whereby very open and insightful details were shared.

The content of the interviews was flexible to allow for exploration of each subject's individual perspective. A list of standard questions served as the spine of the investigation. The questions were designed to explore the research questions (listed on p11) in an open-ended manner rather than to confirm prior judgments.

In terms of the questions I put to the PDs, I think my own practice informs the process. In other words, I apply my own design background when considering what I would like to know, which is very helpful in gaining answers that are interesting from a practice point of view but also from a more conceptual position. For example, I want to find out about the tension between the budget, the schedule and realizing the visual concept effectively. I also wish to discover how design solutions were reached and agreed on. I'm looking for how they extrapolated forward from the script and dealt with all of the obstructions that the production process throws in your way.

The work spanned popular and cult films such as *Caravaggio* (1986), *Trainspotting* (1996) and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) across genres from art house independent cinema to mainstream romantic comedies such as *Notting Hill* (1999)*, Love Actually* (2003) *and Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001). And a diversity of PD approaches, for example I found Gemma Jackson favoured the *In and Out* while Stuart Craig's primary tool is the *Light* and Kave Quinn led with *Colour*. Many of the films had a wide distribution and popular appeal. I would argue that without effective design these films may not have reached the same status.

There are ethical considerations, for example the PDs sign release forms and we agree that I will send material for them to look at prior to publication. None of the participants has ever requested any major changes to the content, merely refining the way they might have phrased an answer to make its meaning absolutely clear in written form. There have also been situations where on reflection I feel the PD may have been indiscreet and if I were to publish what they have said it could be detrimental to their working relationships. On these occasions I have edited the material to remove the potentially problematic details before sending to an editor.

Oral history is a valuable way of capturing stories that may otherwise be lost from history. Historian Paul Thompson's work indicates the wealth of fresh terrain that may be uncovered by bringing recognition to groups of people who wouldn't have had a voice and the importance of oral history in shifting the content and the process by which it is recorded through the opening up of dialogue with the outside world. [44] This method can cross boundaries and open up new areas of inquiry, there are for example projects set up to record artists and designers in particular. The VIVA project (Voices in the Visual Arts) was set up in 2004 as a collection of interviews with people from the arts and creative industries. This is a record of visual arts practice in the 20th and 21st centuries

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[44] Thompson, P. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford University Press, 1988

that can be drawn on as a valuable resource for research.[45] Another example of this type of activity is Professor Pat Kirkham's work in design history, which resulted in major publications on the work of designers Charles and Ray Eames and Saul and Elaine Bass. Regarding the latter, Kirkham uses 'many voices' as she terms it to uncover their working practices and wider context of their lives, '…including reminiscences, images and anecdotes, as well as more obviously academic and analytical modes…' [46]

Oral histories can be subjective by nature, thus issues of validity and reliability can arise around the material generated. Through the repetition of similar methods across the case studies, I found the same points reoccurred across the subjects. With each interview I gathered momentum and in fact each one was like a piece in the jigsaw puzzle as they reiterated similar concerns. My open question approach helped elicit their reflections rather than imposing my own agenda and preconceived ideas on to the subject. Through continued listening and focusing on the dialogues, a sense of commonality appeared and I was able to formulate the key points. The number and range of interviews I have conducted results in a system of supporting evidence. For example although each interview is a separate case the fact that the same points, issues and concerns reoccur across the interviews helps build weight into the research. A working hypothesis was developed during the course of the interviews whereby findings were clarified and refined as the study sample grew in size.

The methods employed fall into the definition used for qualitative research, which often involves observation of the subject and unstructured in-depth interviewing. This form of research is considered effective for enabling researchers to get close to the people they are investigating and be less inclined to impose inappropriate conceptual frameworks on them. [47] One of the favoured techniques of this approach is unstructured interviewing with minimal guidance

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 Sandino, L. University of the Arts, London and the Design History Society
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 Bass, J and Kirkham, P. *Saul Bass. A Life in Film and Design*. Lawrence King Publishing, 2011
47
 Bryman, A. 1988: 3

from the researcher because it allows considerable latitude for interviewees. [48]
The possible 'rambling' that can result from this approach is considered
beneficial as it may reveal a matter of importance that wouldn't have otherwise
come to light with a more rigid interview structure. [49] This openness was the
technique I employed in my first set of interviews which enabled me to see the
subject from the interviewees' perspective.[50] Interestingly social research
academic Alan Bryman refers to this approach as revealing a commitment to
viewing a subject from the point of view of the people being studied, [51] which
relates to my title 'The Designer's Story: Filmmaking from the Perspective of the
Production Designer' and resonates with my aims and objectives for the research
undertaken. Having said this, seeing through the eyes of the subjects being
studied is highlighted by Bryman as having potential pitfalls in that there may be
a degree of subjectivity and problems of subsequent interpretation. I take the
stance that my position is subjective and define it distinctly as the designer's
story – their point of view is the point of my research.

The first set of interviews helped form the shape of my first book. The aim was to
write a book for students on the subject. The resulting *Production Design:
Architects of the Screen,* begins with an historical overview considering the
evolution of the role of production designer. This is followed by a chapter on the
practical process from ideas to finished designs. Two subsequent chapters
consider the creation of place and period, using a combination of textual analysis
and case studies that are described from a practitioner point of view. Secondary
historical research was also used as a methodology. The lines of communication
and flow of ideas during the production process were outlined in my first book
and discussed further in *Production Design for Screen*, where I indicate the
workflow within the art department and the relationship between the PD,
Director and DP (Director of Photography).

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[48] ibid p46
[49] ibid p46
[50] See Appendix 2 for lists of interview questions
[51] Bryman, A. 1988: 61

During the period 2008-2017 I continued to interview PDs. During this phase of interviews my questions evolved and tended to include the five categories as I now perceived them, whereas the earlier conversations had been more open. I refined my findings from earlier interviews and my own practice and built on these with the next set of interviews. More recent research for the book *Production Design for Screen* also broadens the study to US designers.

When I interviewed Peter Lamont, who designed *Bond* from the 1980s to 2006, it was interesting to hear his strong pragmatic approach with an emphasis on realism in relation to using real locations and materials wherever possible. While Alex McDowell, PD turned academic, on the other hand believes in the designer as *World Builder* and conceives the design in conjunction with the writer. On *Minority Report* for example McDowell met with Stephen Spielberg before there was even a script. Their discussions began with the concept of a 'future reality' based in Washington DC, 2050. The writer Scott Frank and McDowell started on the same day and collaborated on the narrative, whereby a script evolved six months later.[52] Jim Bissell elaborated on the importance of finding the guiding philosophy for the project, what he calls the *big idea*. Bissell's strong conceptual approach is beautifully illustrated in films like *ET* (1982) and *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005).[53]

Within the conversations the points that re-occurred began to form a narrative, a shared language voicing the mutual concerns of the designers, which revolved around what I identified as five key strands that then provided the core elements of my model. The results are illustrated in my recent book *(Production Design for Screen)*, in which a new perspective is provided with which to appreciate the conceptual nature of the designers' work and make visible their creative presence.

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[52] Barnwell, J. 2017: 98-99
[53] Barnwell, J. 2017: 162 -169

Research-Informed Practice

At film school my specialism was production design and I went on to work in the art department in various capacities, from runner to PD on a range of film and television productions. My work has ranged from assistant to the PD on soaps to Art Director on short Arts funded films to set decorator and PD on feature length films and mixed media installations. Thus I have had a range of production experience, which has fed my academic interests.

Educational theorist David Kolb's '4 stage learning styles model' [54] is useful to consider in relation to practice. The 4 stages of having an experience, reflecting on it, learning from it and testing and applying what has been learnt in a new situation can be transposed onto the production process in several ways. For example, the knowledge formed from the earlier production is applied to the next and so on in a continual process of practice, reflection, development and refinement.

Each new film project is different; a new script, production team, budget, schedule, locations, characters, story, themes, technical requirements and so on. Thus adapting and having the ability to be flexible and agile are essential skills. New knowledge is tested, reflected on and taken to the next project, where there is always a new set of problems to be solved that are usually different to the last set.

Donald Schön's 'reflection on action' can be applied to this scenario, whereby at the end of each project reflection occurs and learning taken to the next project.[55] With each new film script comes a new set of challenges and problems to be solved, spatially, technically, creatively, economically and logistically. With each project new lessons are learnt and new tools added to the tool kit. Schön defines reflective practice as the practice by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge and uses the term 'knowing in action' to describe

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[54] Kolb, D. 1983: 28

[55] Schön, D. 1983: 26

tacit knowledge. Knowing more than can be articulated is an interesting notion that has resonance to the production designer, who may not always know why they are making certain choices or decisions. PDs often know something will work effectively on screen but not necessarily have analysed why. For example, in my early designs at film school I made choices based on instinctive feelings about the characters, places and the story featured in the script without fully understanding the motivation behind these.

Schön's other category of 'reflection in action' is also relevant to the production process as almost every day of pre-production and production involves problem solving in action. The context of filmmaking is such that there are numerous variables during each stage, which can change and thus demand new solutions in order for the project to continue. This is a dynamic environment requiring agility, where 'reflection in action' is usually essential. Schön describes this process as, 'When someone reflects in action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique but constructs a new theory of the unique case.' [56] Each film production is unique and requires invention and innovation from all parties to make it to the screen.

When I am first given a script to read two processes begin - I think about the logistical elements such as how many different settings there are and I start to imagine how it looks and feels. These twin processes are inseparable and neither one can go forward without the other. After reading the script I mark it up – breaking it down into how many interiors and exteriors there are and what dressing and props are listed in each setting/scene. The next stage is to complete a more detailed breakdown as discussed in Chapter 1 of *Production Design for Screen.*

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[56] Schön, D. 1983: 68

In terms of the visual style, I might already have an idea from the script, which I will begin to develop. The research process will take me into the details of the place, period or story further and either enrich my initial thoughts or take me in a completely different direction. What I am looking for is the concept that will help create a coherent design and add layers of visual meaning through the five categories. Meetings with the director and sometimes producer subsequently take place where ideas are shared and pushed and pulled in a number of directions. The timespan available for this sort of preliminary work depends on the budget – during this period I would typically conduct research, visit possible locations and create some sketches to convey early concepts. Further on in the process I would search for props and dressing, with the help of a set decorator and a props master. My process is further analysed in Appendix 3 in relation to the film *Axed* (2012) where I outline the Visual Concept developed.

When I began designing I was not aware of any categories such as the ones I have mapped out. Primarily my process involved finding the essential physical elements to make the script a reality, the secondary impetus was to make those physical aspects resonate in terms of character, story and atmosphere. The way I set about achieving that was implicit and I can now recognize that as 'tacit knowledge'.[57] I have subsequently become aware of the implicit knowledge through the process of repeated reflection on my own and other PDs' work. The model I have put forward in my writing is the articulation of that tacit knowledge.

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[57] Schön, D. 1983

Conclusion

'Your responsibility is to supply the background to the action but also the thing to hang on to, like everybody else you're there to tell the story and you must remember that it's a dramatic piece and it hasn't got much to do with interior decoration which people sometimes think it has. You offer the producer a production solution and you offer the director a dramatic solution.' [58]

The fact that production design is at the service of the story and the work should not usually upstage the characters or narrative is a recurring issue for an understanding of the subject. Production design provides the physical environment required for the script but also enhances this with layers of psychological and emotional nuance. PDs utilise the environment as a storytelling device through the adept use of the visual language identified in my fivefold model.

Through interviews and close textual analysis of the work of the PD, my research helps expand access and understanding of this area of screen studies. The distinctive approach I have adopted and developed in my cycles of practice, experimentation, conceptualisation and theorisation has moved knowledge on in the field. This has been achieved by offering the fivefold model as a solution to the lack of appropriate language or tools with which to discuss the subject.

Through an analysis of the work of PDs it becomes clear that they are often key collaborators who help create meaning in the image through the selection and combination of choices made during the production process. Crucially my work incorporates the intentions of the PDs into a discussion of the finished film, enabling a consideration of the ways in which their work has impacted on the end product. My writing provides examples of the practical and conceptual process of production design.

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[58] Stuart Craig, author interview, 2004

My work has taken a holistic view in positioning the PD in terms of recurring practices across a wide range of projects and designers, with the intention of reinforcing the evidence of the way in which their work contributes to our understanding of a film. Thus, making the PDs presence visible in terms of their conceptual interpretation of the story into visuals. The PD is often key in the creation of the visual story as it appears on the screen and one of my aims has been to render the PD visible in our reading of those images. As indicated earlier in the discussion, the success of the PD is often tied to ideas around invisible design – environments that appear plausible and do not draw attention to their artificiality. It becomes difficult to credit the work of someone when their work is not apparent on the screen unless the genre is science fiction or historical drama for example. Thus my five simple ways to identify the PDs input can uncover the apparently natural world they have created.

Although the visual signatures of the individual PDs are of interest, on the whole I have sought to convey the contribution of the PD in the final film through a discussion of their process and methods as part of a collaboration. At this stage it feels more helpful to identify and clarify the figure of the PD in general rather than singling out specific designers for scrutiny.

However, I have begun to identify recurring patterns in the work of Hugo L Wyhowski in *Production Design for Screen* [59] and Christopher Hobbs in *The*

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[59] In *Production Design for Screen* I discuss Wyhowski's visual signature in the films *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Nil By Mouth* (1997) and *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002). I identify Wyhowski's prominent use of the 'in and out' in particular as defining his work. Partitions are used as a metaphor to convey the visual concept. The design is layered, often through glass and mirrors building up depth, there is often something to see beyond the central focus of the frame. In these examples the in and out are used expressively to communicate fragmentation and disruption of family life, community and domestic relations. These films all feature working class underprivileged characters, the complexity of whose lives is reflected through these transition points. The boundaries created with different materials signify different ideas in each film and can be read as metaphors for the narrative of each. In *MBL* fluid boundaries blur the distinction between interiors and exteriors and reflect the fluidity of race, gender and class. Rigid boundaries in *NBM* signify the lack of options available to characters who are tightly bound and restricted by limited space and opportunities. In *DPT* temporary boundaries are used to convey shifting nationality and status. Barnwell, J. 2017: 122-125

Journal of British Cinema and Television [60] illustrating it is possible to achieve this using my model. This is an area ripe for further investigation.

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[60] Christopher Hobbs boldly challenges conventions around representing time and place - his work draws attention to the constructed nature of film and the expressive possibilities of design. In *Caravaggio* (1986) Hobbs physically strips away the setting to enable us to see beyond the period the film is set in and get closer to the characters and the world they inhabit.

'I always do my research very carefully first, before branching out in rather wild directions. The images all look the same in books because that's the only reference point and so the trick is to do the research and then try to think yourself into the period as far as you can go and then invent the past. There is so much that we don't know, that is forgotten or has disappeared. So there is a lot of leeway as long as you keep within the spirit of the period.' (Hobbs, 2000)

For example in *Caravaggio*, Hobbs designed a formula of shadows, shapes, spaces and textures to create an Italy of the imagination. The repetition and revamping of bland blocks interspersed with key props and dressing exemplifies Hobbs signature – his colour palette is often restricted using key colours sparingly to punctuate.

For *Edward II* Hobbs took these ideas even further using a series of plaster blocks on wheels instead of conventional rooms the spaces were created using different configurations of the blocks. This enabled the in and out and lighting to function expressively, without windows or doors movement and lighting was motivated by the emotion of the scene. This strategy was repeated in *Gormenghast* (2000) on a larger scale.

Barnwell, J. 2005: 117-129

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Appendix 1
Production Designers interviewed with brief filmographies

Alex McDowell (2016)
The Terminal (2004)
Minority Report (2002)
Fight Club (1999)

Moira Tait (2015)
A *Visit From Miss Prothero*, TV series (1978)
Sunset Across The Bay, TV series (1975)
Colditz, TV series (1972-1973)
Z Cars, TV series (1964-1972)
The Onedin Line, TV series (1971)

Maria Djurkovic (2015)
The Snowman (2017)
The Imitation Game (2014)
Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (2011)
Mamma Mia! (2008)
The Hours (2002)
Billy Elliot (2000)

Jim Bissell (2015)
Suburbicon (2017)
The Monuments Men (2014)
The Spiderwick Chronicles (2008)
300 (2006)
Good Night, and Good Luck (2005)
Arachnophobia (1990)
Always (1989)
Someone To Watch Over Me (1987)
ET (1982)

Tatiana Macdonald (2015), Set Decorator
The Snowman (2017)
The Imitation Game (2014)
Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (2011)
Billy Elliot (2000)

Mimi Gramatky (2014)
10,000 Days, TV series (2010)
Mr & Mrs Smith, TV series (1996)

Stuart Craig (2014, 2008, 2000)
Harry Potter series of films (2001-2011)
Notting Hill (1999)
The English Patient (1996)
Chaplin (1992)

Anna Pritchard (2014)
Vanity Fair, TV series (2018)
Broadchurch, TV series (2017)
Top Boy (2013)
Inside Men, TV series *(2012)*
Dive (2010)

Peter Lamont (2007)
Casino Royale (2006)
Die Another Day (2002)
The World Is Not Enough (1999)
Titanic (1997)
GoldenEye (1995)
Licence To Kill (1989)
Aliens (1986)
A View To A Kill (1985)

Nick Ellis (2005)
Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging (2008)
Bride and Prejudice (2004)
Bend It Like Beckham (2002)

Gemma Jackson (2005)
Game of Thrones, TV series (2011-2015)
Finding Neverland (2004)
Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)
Iris (2001)

Martin Childs (2005)
The Crown, TV series (2016-2017)
Lady in the Water (2006)
From Hell (2001)
Shakespeare in Love (1998)
Mrs Brown (1997)

Jim Clay (2005)
Great Expectations (2012)
Children of Men (2006)
Match Point (2005)
Love Actually (2003)
About A Boy (2002)
Onegin (1999)
The Crying Game (1992)

Hugo Luczyc Wyhowski (2004)
Dirty Pretty Things (2002)
Madeline (1998)
Nil By Mouth (1997)
Prick Up Your Ears (1987)
*My Beautiful Laundrette (*1985)

Christopher Hobbs (2000)
Gormenghast, TV series (2000)
Mansfield Park (1999)
Velvet Goldmine (1998)
The Long Day Closes (1992)
Edward II (1991)
The Last of England (1987)
Caravaggio (1986)

Kave Quinn (2000)
Far From The Madding Crowd (2015)
The Woman In Black (2012)
A Life Less Ordinary (1997)
Trainspotting (1996)
Shallow Grave (1994)

Malcolm Thornton (2000)
*Lark Rise To Candleford (*2008)
Tipping The Velvet (2002)
*Oliver Twist (*1999)
Our Mutual Friend (1998)
A Sense of Guilt (1990)
*Doctor Who (*1981)

Laurence Williams (2000)
EastEnders series designer (1993-1999)

Appendix 2
Selection of interview questions spanning the period 2000 – 2015

Alex McDowell, via Skype, 2015
Specific to *Minority Report*
1. Can you give a brief overview of the project?
2. How would you describe the overarching design concept?
3. What were the references/key images that you used?
4. What is your starting point in creating a coherent design concept? (eg sketching, researching, emotional, paintings etc)
5. What different ways did you use visual metaphor to convey the concepts (eg light, space, colour, etc)?
6. Did you actively look for a contrast to your design concept?
7. Can you give an example of how you used space to convey story/character?
8. Can you talk about the characters movement in the setting – especially the in and out?
9. What was your approach to colour on this project?
10. What was your approach to light in this project?
11. How involved did you get in terms of dressing?
12. How closely did you collaborate with the Director, DOP and other members of the team?
13. In what ways did budget influence your process?
14. Could you outline a rough timeline/workflow on this project to illustrate the process?
15. Can you send 4 or 5 images that illustrate your design process on this?

Tatiana Macdonald, Kentish Town, 2015
Specific to *Tinker Tailor Soldier, Spy*
1. Can you give a brief overview of the project?
2. How would you describe the overarching design concept?
3. What were the references/key images that you used?
4.What is your starting point?(eg sketching, researching, emotional, paintings etc)
5. What different ways did you use visual metaphor to convey the concepts (eg light, space, colour)?
6. How important are texture, pattern, material?
7. In what ways do you use the layout of the room spatially to convey story/character?
8. Can you talk about the characters movement in the setting – especially the in and out in relation to your positioning of items?
9. What was your approach to colour on this project?
10. What was your approach to light in this project, for example did you decide to position lights?
11. How do you collaborate with the designer and other members of the team?
12. In what ways did budget influence your process?
13. Could you outline a rough timeline/workflow on this project to illustrate the process?
14. Can you send 4 or 5 images that illustrate your process on this?

Stuart Craig, Leavesden Studios, 2014
Stuart had finished the HP series and was in pre production for *The Legend of Tarzan* (2016).
1. How would you describe the overarching design for the HP series of films?
2. How would you describe each one?
3. Was it difficult to create a coherent design concept for such a project?
4. Is there a design progression?
5. Can you give an example where colour choice is motivated by the psychology of the scene?
6. Do you work with a dressing plan? Or leave set dresser to it? How involved do you get with that?
7. What else do you consider building blocks of the design?
8. You've talked about the importance of sketching settings from your idea of where the master shot is ('If you allow an alternative to present itself all can be lost') – can you elaborate on this?
9. Do you see repeated patterns in your work? What are they?
10. In what ways do you, the director and DP collaborate?
11. How closely do you work with key members of your art department?
12. Where do you get your ideas and inspiration from, painters, photographers etc?
13. Old studio system design bible – what images would you put in it?
14. What is the key idea in *Tarzan* – design concept?
15. How is it being realized?
16. What scenes are creating challenges?
17. What are your references for the design?

Stuart Craig, Leavesden Studios, 2008

Stuart is in the midst of filming *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince.*

1. How have the changing directors through the series affected your process?
2. This is an unfair question but do you have a favourite in terms of the overall film and your design?
3. Can you talk through the process about how the books have influenced that? I understand that you have tried to stay true to the books. Has that helped or hindered you at particular times?
4. What did you look at apart from the books in terms of reference material and inspiration?
5. In the Ministry of the last one there certainly appear to be several periods combined in one place – what were your references for that? I know you looked at the London Underground.
6. Could you describe how important light is in your design process?
7. What about the entrance and exit points? How early do you decide on the relationship between the interior and the exterior and how you make that relevant and possibly enhance the story?
8. How much of your own drawing do you do now you are the head of such a big art department?
9. What is your approach to the colour palette?
10. And how does that work in terms of contrast with the Dursleys, which tends to be more colourful?
11. How influential is the CGI on your design?
12. How do you design for characters who have very limited personal space?
13. In the last one Imelda Staunton's office must have been an opportunity to have some fun?
14. Can you give an example of something you are particularly pleased with and explain why?
15. Congratulations on your recent Lifetime Achievement Award. I wanted to ask if awards impact on your work in any way?

Stuart Craig, Windsor, 2000

1. Can you describe the process you go through designing for a film?
2. What were you trying to achieve with *The English Patient*? Did it work?
3. How do you choose your colour palette?
4. Why work in this medium?
5. Whose work do you admire?
6. How would you characterize British film design?
7. What influences you?

Gemma Jackson, Maida Vale, 2005

1. Can you tell me about a film you've worked on that makes interesting use of the home?
2. What percentage of the film is built?
3. What was your palette?
4. How much did you think about the light and the composition?
5. Did you have a key underlying concept or motif that helped it all gel?
6. How much did you collaborate with the director?
7. What do you think of the idea of the home as one of the characters in a film?
8. Can you tell me about the concept for the home in *Bridget Jones*?
9. What was the colour palette for *Bridget Jones*?

Nick Ellis, Soho, 2005

1. How did you go about designing the homes of the characters in *Bend it Like Beckham*?
2. Would you define your work as distinctly British in any way?
3. What shorthands do you use to achieve a sense of a time or place?
4. How important is authenticity to your design?
5. What references have you drawn on?
6. Do you think your designs are identifiable through themes, motifs etc that reoccur in your work?
7. Do you notice any trends in prod des at the moment?
8. Which designers work do you admire?
9. How did your home environment in *Bend It* support, heighten the narrative?
10. Did it change or adapt with the story?
11. The home has been described as another character in the film, would you agree with that?

Hugo L Wyhowski, Shepperton Studios, 2004

1. Would you define your work as distinctly British in any way?
2. What shorthands do you use to achieve a sense of a time or place?
3. How important is authenticity to your design?
4. What references have you drawn on?
5. Do you think your designs are identifiable through themes, motifs etc that reoccur in your work?
6. How do you think your work might be defined with hindsight?
7. Do you notice any trends in prod des at the moment?
8. Which designers work do you admire?
9. How did your home environment in *Nil By Mouth* support, heighten the narrative?
10. Did it change or adapt with the story?
11. The home has been described as another character in film. To what extent would you agree with that?

Christopher Hobbs, Mile End, 2000

1. What do you consider the role of production design to be?
2. How would you say it has evolved during the time you have been making films?
3. Do you have any particular themes, motifs that reoccur in your work?
4. Do you notice any trends in production design at the moment?
5. How do you think you work might be defined with hindsight?
6. To what extent are your designs open to interpretation?
7. Whose work do you admire? (film, painters etc)
8. Did you make a conscious decision to make film/tv your medium?
9. Can you tell me about the work you did on *Caravaggio*?
10. How does the budget affect your designs? (big budget liberating or limiting?)
11. Can you describe how you work with different directors?

Kave Quinn, Kilburn, 2000

1. How long did you have to prepare to shoot *Trainspotting*?
2. Can you explain what you were trying to achieve with the design?
3. Do you think you achieved it?
4. What obstacles did you meet in its realization?
5. What research/refs did you use (real life, other film, paintings etc)?
6. How many different locations did you use?
7. How many set builds?
8. What was the budget?
9. How did your vision translate – does it look as you'd intended?

Appendix 3
Axed **commentary**

Film Synopsis
After being made redundant, workaholic Kurt is devastated. He takes his family on a day out to the country. Will he make amends for his years of neglect or is there something less savoury on his mind? Once in the countryside the family crosses into another world where the veneer of normality is dispensed with. Kurt's mental state spirals as he transforms from pen pusher to a physically adept psychotic.

On first reading the script for *Axed*, I had a strong sense of masculinity in crisis, which led me to think about similar films that may be useful reference material. Films included - *Rambo, Die Hard, Straw Dogs, The Shining, Eden Lake, American Psycho, Falling Down, Withnail & I*. The redundancy of old archetypes and the confusion, anger and mental health issues arising from this shifting landscape was a strong strand running through these examples.

In this film I applied the five strands of the Visual Concept Analysis to my development of the designs. Previously my approach would usually include these elements without recognizing them in quite such a strategic way.

Summary of the Visual Concept
I devised the visual concept in Axed as the contrast between the country and the city. This involved the design of two key settings – the city home and the country lodge. The intention was to enhance the contrast that existed in the script between these two locations to heighten the tension between the old archetypes of masculinity (the country) and the modern landscape (the city). Entwined with this was the importance of context – a functioning psychotic in the urban workplace becomes a brutal killer in the rural landscape.

I took inspiration from *Psycho* (1960) where the modern motel functions as the façade in the foreground and the old house in the background represents the dark damaged psyche. I meant the family home in London to signify the mundane façade and the country lodge to suggest the dark possibilities lurking beneath the surface.

In *Axed* the intention was to create a strong visual contrast between the city and the country interiors. At the beginning of the film the family are introduced through their home in the city. They subsequently set off on a journey to the countryside, which is new and unfamiliar territory in terms of place and psychology.

The city home, although sterile, gives us an impression of a safe and familiar society - the conservative muted tones on the walls, the 'homely' dressing on the kitchen table. This contrast was intentionally created to enhance the sense of

place and the part it plays in conveying essential aspects of character and narrative.

The contrast between the family home and the country lodge is reversed from conventional expectations. Nature and the countryside are often used to signify positive aspects of film narrative, while the city is an alienating urban hell. In this instance the family home is sterile, superficial and empty. There are lots of references to the countryside in the home in the form of pictures, colour palette, ornaments and furnishing. The real countryside is a dangerous place where nature violently takes over. The idyllic country cottage is actually a bare inhospitable shack that has absolutely nothing cosy about it. This use of the countryside allows the action to take place away from societal norms and urban conventions. It is another place and conjures another time where a more savage way of life is signified.

In *Axed* the two settings are situated in geographically different places and as such the space they engender seems self contained and impenetrable. It is difficult to see how we would cross from one to the other, which helps add to the sense that they are different worlds. Still the underlying idea that the family home in London represents the everyday mundane façade (Bates Motel) and the country lodge the dark possibilities lurking beneath the surface (the house on the hill) is present and accentuated through the use of the designer's tool – 'Design Contrast'.

Pre-production
Brief notes on the production process of the film and how this influenced the process and product.

I went on several recces with the director to look at possible London houses to use as locations. We discussed, photographed and made sketches of how different scenes might work in the different spaces. Equally important from a budgetary point of view was what would be needed to decorate the different houses – what should be added but also what would be taken away.   We looked at the architecture of each one considering to what extent it could help us tell our story visually and to what extent it might contradict or confuse. We eventually found a house in Camberwell, South East London that we thought struck the right balance.

Next we visited various possible locations in the surrounding area – Suffolk, Surrey and so forth but none seemed to be right for the desolate and isolated sense we were looking for. Eventually the country lodge was found in the Lake District, which was further away than we would have liked ideally but otherwise worked well with our intentions - a traditional National Trust stone cottage situated in some farmland, no other houses are in sight of the cottage. Bleak hills wrap around the building with a lone track leading up to the entrance.

I had several subsequent meetings with the director where we discussed different ideas and I ran various sketches and concepts by him and we developed the visual style of the film.

Once we had found the locations the director began crewing up starting with the DOP whom we had worked with previously. This is often an interesting moment when the project broadens out and the DOP adds their ideas into the collaboration. The DOP developed the lighting and shooting style from the director's initial wish for a verité style to a more traditional drama approach. In practical terms this meant more time and more money would be required to achieve the end product.

The final schedule involved a 2-day shoot in the London location and a 7-day shoot in the Lake District with a subsequent 2 days of pick up shots. This was a very tight schedule to shoot a feature length film on which had implications for the art department in terms of dressing and redressing settings fast enough for the intended pace of the production. Time and money are always key to any production – I had to find ways of simplifying some of my ideas to make them achievable within the available resources.

We were not in a position to construct any sets for the film so technical drawings were not a part of the process on this occasion. The London home was a particularly tight turnaround so the most important aspect of this was to identify what we needed to take away and add to each room. As we wouldn't be able to change fundamentals like doors, windows or even the colour of the walls we needed to strip away anything that didn't connect with what we wanted the house to convey.

The Five Categories/Tools

1) Space
The space can be closed in like a box or opened up in interesting ways through architectural design such as ceiling height, shapes, angles, levels, layers and so forth.

We found a traditional Georgian terrace in Camberwell to use for the family home, which was 4 storeys high – perfect for creating a layered geography of space. The walls were decorated in a neutral palette – which was important as we did not have the resources to paint or change fundamental aspects like this. It was essential to find a space that told the story we wanted and did not contradict our concept. Nothing should stand out or draw attention to itself initially – the surface appearance of normality created to give way to an intentionally sterile space, lacking life and love.

Space is layered vertically from top to bottom and is clearly divided between the adult and children. The compartmentalising of space reflects a hierarchy that

ensnares all within it. The head of the home (the father) is defined through his absence physically and emotionally.

For the country lodge a traditional National Trust stone cottage was located situated in some farmland. Once inside, the ground floor has small windows letting very little natural light in. The solid stone floor was perfect in sustaining the cold and inhospitable notion. A large unlit fireplace is the centerpiece of the lounge area.

Everyone comes together in this space, which allows the whole family to interact on the same level geographically.   A sense of shared experience and opening up is achieved through this physical proximity. Condensing the characters in one place like this heightens the tension and brings the action to a head. The attic is reserved for extremes of brutality, torture and murder.

I tried to create depth, layering and building up from the front to the back of the frame. The space is organic in the cottage and we see beyond and out of windows, or through a door to another room. In this way the design attempts to use dead space to further enhance the image.

Many of the PDs I have spoken with agree that it is important when designing a room to interpret where the actors are going to be and manipulate that. For example, positioning key furniture like tables and chairs in the desired point in the frame. The aim here was to position these items to help create coherence and even claustrophobia.

2) In and Out
How characters enter and exit the space geographically is designed with great care and attention. For example, whether it is through a columned doorway in *Notting Hill*, a decrepit concrete stairwell in *Nil By Mouth* or an urban fairytale turret in *Bridget Jones* these all impact on our sense of character and story.

In *Axed* the family home is located in an attractive, wealthy area that the audience never sees, because the characters are never seen to enter or exit their home. There is no framing of their world - it exists only behind closed doors which helps convey an unnatural feeling and a sense of unease. They are not grounded in the physical, external world. We just see them move within the interiors - up and down between attic and basement. The stairs are used to create levels, which distance the characters from each other – further isolating and alienating them.

The country lodge provides a huge contrast to this– the characters are seen coming in and out through a front and back door directly into the landscape that surrounds them. The cottage is framed by the exterior landscape, which grounds and helps contextualise the action – it is like another character that connects with the father in a visceral sense. The father is present and highly active in this environment.

Once inside the majority of action takes place on one level – the ground floor, rooting them organically in the rural space in a way that wasn't possible in the city. When designed effectively the architecture operates in this way controlling physical aspects of performance to continually reinforce the underlying concepts.

3) Light
How a scene is lit includes decisions about position, intensity, direction and source (natural or artificial). As Stuart Craig says,

'It's the most important decision really. Where you put the window or the practical lamp. We discuss it, make sketches and models and talk to the cameraman as early as possible. Without light there is no form and so it's crucial. You block the scene in your head with that in mind. I always start with a window, you know when you draw a face you start with the oval of the head and then the next thing you put in are the eyes and it's exactly the same with the set. My first doodle will be a rectangle of a window.' (Author interview 2008)

The light in the family home is naturalistic and ties in with the documentary style craved by the director of available light from natural sources. The lodge uses a more expressionistic lighting design that ties in with horror film conventions. In this way the lighting design supports the shift from the veneer of normality in the first location to the unraveling of the killer's mind in the second.

The film starts with lots of light and is increasingly cast in shadow. Dark corners of cold rooms fill the screen. Decisions about motivated light sources are made in conjunction with the Director and the DOP. This was an area of conflict on the shoot as the DOP wanted to take time to light each scene according to the emotional intensity. While the Director wanted to use available light and use a more documentary lighting style.   Although time consuming the lighting decisions help create a more dramatic look that conveys the emotional journey of the characters.

In real locations controlling light can be more complicated than in a studio build, for example too many or too few motivated light sources like windows and doors can pose problems.   The windows are in place and cannot be positioned to suit the action/design. That is why the recce stage is so important in finding places that work with the design concept in the first place. However the practical lamps can easily be manipulated and used to create the three quarter backlight that is so effective– to the back and side of the scene.

4) Colour
The psychological effects of colour can be crafted in such a way as to evoke atmosphere, time, place, character and even plot development.   For example, key colours can be attributed to different characters or locations. In *Shallow Grave* (1994) all of the rooms are based on the palette in Edward Hopper's

paintings (extensive use of golden burnished colours in particular) apart from the room that Keith Allen's character dies in which is purple (which the paintings of Francis Bacon provided the inspiration for). Thus distinguishing the room from the rest of the house and hinting at story development.

Even when colour is not used in such bold ways it is always carefully considered, as Stuart Craig says,

'The safest thing in film is to eliminate colour, the more limited the palette the more effective. It allows the lighting to work. The colours that are used should be motivated by the psychology of the scene. Colour does have a colour temperature and an emotional temperature that we respond to.' (Author interview, 2008)

In *Axed* the colour palette throughout is neutral – moving from pale to dark. In the London home clues to underlying problems exist in the lack of colour and hence vibrancy, life or honesty. The only deviation was the children's bedrooms, where small splashes of bold colours were used to suggest rebellion.

For *Chinatown* (1974) Richard Sylbert emphasised the lack of water in the story through his choice of colours,

'The colour palette must evoke heat and the absence of water. The spectrum in the film thus starts with the colour of burnt grass and goes through to amber, white, straw yellow to a brown shade of peanut butter.' (in Ettedgui 1999: 40)

I took this strong idea and reversed it for Axed. Starting without water in the city and adding it to the rural palette worked as a symbol of life. The sterile city colour scheme is swapped for lush fertile countryside. In the family home this is cream, pale beige and soft green switching in the countryside to the darker end of the spectrum – saturated earthy tones of dark brown, slate grey and moss green. Once in the country water is added metaphorically. I eliminated colours that did not tie in with my colour scheme.

5) Set Decoration
The dressing involves choices like size, shape, style and texture which all combine to create mood, and further enhance the concept in ways already established by the more fundamental building blocks such as space and light.

The aim for the family home was to create a bland place, emptied out of characteristics that might give any depth or charm. Appearing perfectly ordered - an almost clinical environment comprised of entirely synthetic materials. The generic absence of character signals the family's withdrawal from each other and the lack of life or warmth in the home.

This dressing scheme helps to support the idea that Kurt is uptight and wants his environment to be perfect, clean, tidy and ordered. Thus it appears pleasant but something repressed lurks beneath the surface. An ambiguous space that has nothing of the man of the house in evidence, devoid of personality it is this very lack that signals the tensions that are bubbling up.

Although there is nothing of nature in this sterile house there are lots of references to nature connoting an idyllic countryside and hinting at what is to come in the narrative when the family visit the country. Wherever possible we aimed to weave in references to nature such as leaf and tree prints to create a recurring motif. For example we found a vinyl tablecloth covered in pictures of plants, which was perfect.

A large number of props and dressing were added into the city home location to help create our interpretation of the space. Neutral cushions, throws, lavish coffee-table books and glossy magazines, bland paintings in the sitting room. Beige coloured towels and expensive toiletries for the bathroom, alongside neutral bedding for the couple's cold clinical bedroom. The textures were flat and smooth – to contribute to the sense of veneer.

We removed all the items that contradicted the concept – anything outside of our colour palette, anything bold or eye catching, all personal artefacts. Right down to potted plants or anything remotely organic.

The children's rooms stand out from the rest of the home as they are personalised to express aspects of their characters. There is a fragment of freedom from the constraints and oppressive rigidity of the rest of the house (the communal areas). This individuality hints at a hopeful outcome.

The country lodge is a rustic, basic, traditional building that has no home comforts. It is stripped down to its essential function as a shelter. The dressing in the lodge uses entirely natural materials – wood, leather, animal skins and bones. This adds to the idea of getting back to nature and away from society along with the stripping away of the trappings of contemporary life. A few items of basic furniture such as a dark leather sofa, a wooden dining table and chairs were retained in the location. In terms of texture all softer more homely items were removed.

Agricultural machinery was dressed into the exterior shots to suggest that it is lying around – out of use, littering the landscape once worked to enhance the theme of industrial/male redundancy. These indications of physical labour of the past are also in contrast to the office work that Kurt has been engaged in. Sharp instruments in and outside the lodge were used to suggest the danger that lies ahead. Any items we could find that were sharp or violent looking were included with glee.

The lodge becomes darker and darker, more and more primal. We tried to entwine this location and Kurt in a way that makes it difficult to discern whether the lodge is merely a reflection of Kurt's mind or an active influential character itself. Referencing *The Shining* in the sense that the hotel slowly seeps into the character's psyche and the boundary becomes blurred between place and character.

Conclusion

Space is used to communicate fragmentation and the disruption of family life. The home in this film is not just a symbol of the status quo but also a catalyst for change. The domestic space is forsaken and never returned to in the narrative. Compartmentalised spaces where secrets and lies lurk are exchanged for a freer, communal space – an arena where everything is able to come out in the open. This takes us on a journey from repression to extreme violence.

The composition aims to reflect the characters emotional lives. The ideal home on the surface is an unattractive place to be avoided, skulked about in and ultimately abandoned. This is realistic in terms of where these characters might live and expressionistic in the way space has been utilised.

The neutral palette helps deny the constructed nature of the setting implying an 'undesigned' space. Restricting the palette like this helps achieve a simplicity and coherence to the overall design that conceals the complexity of the relations within.

These ideas follow through to the limited use of dressing which is intended to signal 'a lack' in the apparently normal middle class family that is revealed as the narrative unfolds. The designs in the film create distinctive textures, which support themes in the narrative and convey underpinning ideas about the characters. I have been able to utilize my own designs as an on going experiment, testing out my ideas through the process of making a film.