

# Film Production Design :

THE ART DEPARTMENT

# The Design Team

The production designer supervises a team of artisans and craftspeople who execute and produce the work generated by the production designer's plan.

The nucleus of the art department staff consists of *the art director, set designer, set decorator, and property master* followed by a support staff that includes a *buyer, construction coordinator, construction crew, production illustrator, scenic artist, set dresser, greens man, draftsman, location manager, painters, carpenter, and location scout*.

*The costume designer and hair and makeup crews* are separate departments all under the supervision of the production designer. Because the production designer is responsible for the look of the film, hair, makeup and costume design must be coordinated in order to achieve a singular design result.

# **Art Director**

The art director runs the show during production. He supervises the art department crew on set and reports directly to the production designer. Depending on the relationship between the production designer and the art director, the production designer may remain off-set and continue designing and coordinating, meeting with other department heads while the art director works with the shooting crew on a day- to-day basis.

If there is no production designer on the film, the art director is responsible for the design of the movie.

# Set Designer

The set designer is responsible for designing and supervising the construction of sets based on the ideas and input of the production designer.

The set designer, brought in by the production designer to plan and create the elevation drawings used to construct a set, drafts blueprints based on concepts, descriptions, or conceptual drawings and then oversees construction of the set and any modifications ordered by the production designer or the director.

The set designer collaborates with the director and director of photography to plan how the set will be employed and photographed.

on a small production, this job can be done by the art director or production designer.

**Set Decorator** : As noted earlier, the set decorator is responsible for the décor of a set or location. Décor includes rugs, practical lighting fixtures, furniture, window treatments, wall hangings, and all details of the interior decoration of the space. The décor must reflect the period, characters, and intent of the story.

**Lead Man** : The lead man, or assistant set decorator, locates objects, furniture, and other décor elements used to dress the set.

**Swing Gang** : The set dressing crew, also known as the swing gang, works under the supervision of the lead man to find, gather, and collect décor elements.

# **Hair and Makeup**

Hair and makeup design and application can be performed by one or two crafts- people, or by a team. The hair crew researches, creates, and administers the proper hairstyles for the characters, story, place, and time period to serve the director's point of view toward the story.

Makeup and hair are visual elements that impact on the look and personality of the character and help establish period, mood, and atmosphere. They must be designed and created within the overall design of the film. The final word on hair and makeup comes from the director and production designer.

# Hair and Makeup

The production designer should have an initial consultation with the makeup and hair department during pre-production to discuss issues concerning the visual interpretation of the movie. The discussion will vary depending on the film, as some will have more emphasis on special makeup and hair design (especially horror, science fiction, and fantasy films), but there are basic issues to cover.

- *Period.*
- *Region.*
- *Characters.*
- *Time frame of the story.*
- *Costumes.*
- *Logistics, materials, and budget.*

Makeup and hair will have read the screenplay and have begun preliminary drawings of hair and makeup design, color, and texture so those issues can be discussed with the production designer, who then gives his notes and suggestions.

# Construction Coordinator

The construction coordinator, responsible for the building of sets, follows the working drawings and drafting of the art department and supervises the construction crew. The set is built to the exact specifications of the plan. There are professionals who specialize in construction coordination for film production design.

The construction crew is made up of many artisans:

- *Carpenters*
- *Painters*



# Property Master

The property master is responsible for objects and props handled and used by the actors. He works with the set decorator and production designer to identify all necessary props and is responsible for obtaining them.

The property master consults and collaborates with the production designer to identify and then go out and get all the props needed for the story.

Filmmakers should always have a backup plan and backup equipment if possible. It's a good idea to have a selection for each prop in case minds are changed on set. It's a good work ethic to have an identical backup for any prop, but there are categories of property items that need reserves because they get used up or damaged.

# **Property Master**

Firearms and weapons are handled separately by an armourer who supervises safety at all times and instructs the actors on how to employ the weapons. To avoid confusion and misunderstanding, always notify police officials when using weapons on a set, whether the location is interior or exterior. Never use a real loaded weapon on a film, and practice the utmost care when working with any weaponry on set.

# Location Scout

After discussions with the director and production designer, the location scout searches for the places indicated in the script. He takes still photos and shoots video to aid in the search process and reports back what he has found to the production designer. After locating and documenting a selection of choices and disseminating the material, the location scout takes the production designer and the director to the sites he has found.

Check to see that the neighbors know about the production. Late night shoots, chaotic, violent, or loud scenes, or scenes involving nudity, can disturb and offend neighbors. Also inform the local police if the film contains action depicting drug use or any illegal activity that may be misconstrued by observers.

# **Location Manager**

The person responsible for the location in pre-production and during shooting until the crew is finished is the location manager, who is accountable for the security of the property and equipment.

## **Greensman**

The greensman is responsible for the care, maintenance, and style of grass, shrubbery, flowers, trees and plants. Locations can be transformed with creative landscaping that deals with continuity and regional specifics.

# **Buyer**

This member of the art department purchases furniture, décor, clothes, props, and other design elements. Buyers must know vendors and sources well and have good negotiation skills. Items can also be rented and loaned. The low-budget filmmaker must rely on networking skills and the gift of getting others to participate and contribute to the project.

# **Scenic Artist**

An art department specialist who creates all painted backgrounds, prop paintings, signage, any illustrative material, magazine covers, book jackets, and murals indicated by the story,

# **Costume Designer**

The costume designer creates or selects the clothing to be worn by the actors. The costume designer must have an in-depth background in period dress and an in-depth understanding of character and story. The costumes may have to be conceived, drawn, and then manufactured from scratch due to the nature of the narrative, the characters, and the actors playing the parts.

The color and texture concept has been established and agreed upon by the director and production designer. When the costume designer comes on the project, the production designer tells him the parameters of the colors the film will be set in. The costume designer takes samples of the color scheme and begins to draw designs for the characters' costumes.

# **Production Illustrators**

Production illustrators are artists who paint or draw a conception of the production designer's ideas for a set or a design moment for the film. They are helpful in fantasy or sci-fi films such as *Star Wars (1977)*.

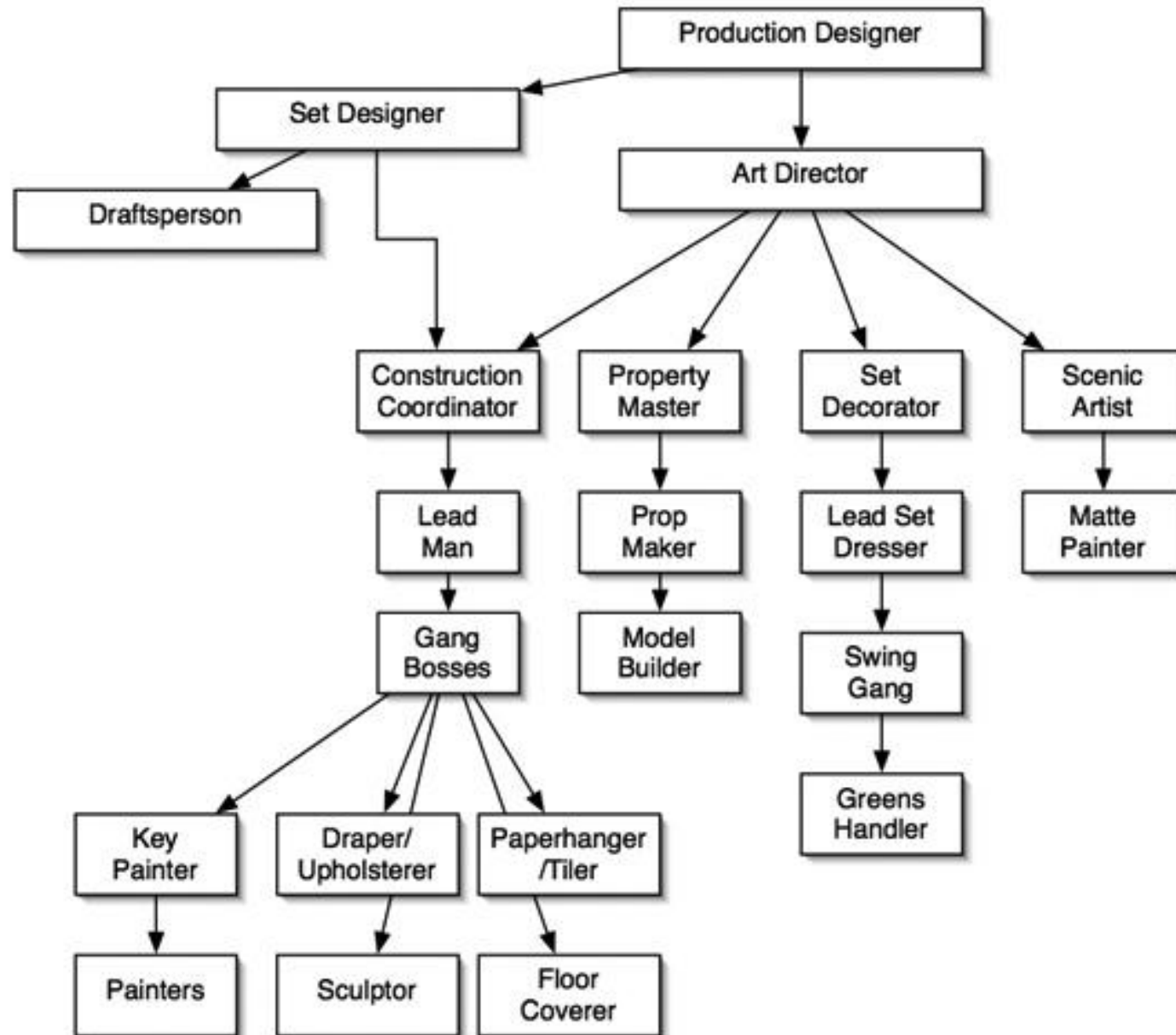
## **Draftsman**

The draftsman makes technical drawings that detail a plan to build a set. They are precise, uniform technical drawings created to exact scale. Drafting for a film is the same as any architectural plan, so any competent draftsman can assist your project.

# **Set Dresser**

The set dresser works under the supervision of the set decorator and is responsible for putting the décor on set. An experienced set dresser has a background in furnishing and decorating, a sense of style, and understanding of the role of design in storytelling is necessary.





# Catherine Martin (1965 – present)



# Filmography for Production Design Credit

2013 The Great Gatsby

2008 Australia

2001 Moulin Rouge!

1996 Romeo + Juliet

1992 Strictly Ballroom