

Film Production Design :

Research

Design Files

- Create an alphabetical series of file folders labeled by subject: Chinese Restaurants, Independent Bookstores, Laundromats, New York Apartments, Outdoor Swimming Pools.
- The files of an experienced production designer will have photographs from magazines, illustrations from books and original location photographs of a wide range of sites.

Painting

- Paintings can be an excellent resource.
- Unlike photographs, which may seem to offer a true reflection of reality, paintings offer unique ways of seeing and interpretation.
- Representational works contain information about architecture, clothing, status, attitude, social mores, and history.
- Nonrepresentational paintings can provide psychological and atmospheric inspiration, in addition to ideas about the use of frame, spatial relationships, color, texture, and composition.

Photographs

- Archival photographs: Historical shots of interior or exterior locations are a valuable and accurate reference to study, understand, and determine physical space, architecture, details, dimension, texture, and color.
- Archival photographs are available in libraries and museum collections, magazines, photo houses (for a fee), on the Internet, and in book form.

Magazines

- Magazines are an excellent and accessible research source.
- A range of magazines covering every conceivable contemporary subject is currently on the market.
- Libraries are a good source for back issues, and older magazines such as *Life*, *Look*, and *the Saturday Evening Post* are excellent repositories of history, culture, and style across many decades.

Literature

- Design ideas can come from all the visual arts, but fictional literature and nonfiction literary works are important sources, too, because words stimulate visual ideas and deliver prose descriptions that contain details about a time and place.
- Period novels and contemporary works of literature will provide background that can bring insight to the visualization.
- Reading will bring literary intelligence and a poetic sensibility to your ideas for the movie.

Video & Film Reels

- If you have a camcorder, regard it as an invaluable research tool.
- It will enable you to capture images on location scouting expeditions and to create a library of architectural styles, terrain, backgrounds, cities, towns, and countries.
- Documentaries are also a valuable asset in investigating a wide range of subjects.

Oral History

- The testimony of real people can often be of valuable assistance in visualizing a film.
- Interview subjects can relate details of time and place with accurate specificity.

The Internet

- You can connect with libraries and archives that provide a wealth of resource for production designers.
- Print out images from Web sites, file them, and use them for reference and presentations.

Clearance and Permissions

- During the research process, be careful to check if any design element is trademarked or copyrighted.
- In such cases, you must get clearance or permission.

Product Placement

- During the research and design process the filmmaker may choose to bring income into the project through product placement deals, which occur when a company pays the filmmaker a fee to clearly feature its product in a film.
- The product must be part of the design style of the film and part of the lives of the characters and their environment.

Exercise

Read the novel, short story, manga or comic book and research about the production design and visualization with the period time of the story that you've read.