

ordinary mortals perceive—and when directors such as Paul Thomas Anderson (*The Master*, 2012), Terence Malick (*The Tree of Life*, 2011), and Alfonso Cuarón (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006) base their movies on dreamlike or mystical visions, we sometimes call their movies visionary. *Vision* and *visionary* are not terms to be used lightly.

Mise-en-scène can be highly personal and can help us distinguish one director's work from another's. But it can also be created through a predetermined formula, as it was, for instance, by the studios during the classical Hollywood studio era, when each studio typically had its own look. In addition, genre formulas can have a powerful influence on the mise-en-scène of individual films within that genre. Every director of a new film within a genre understands the pressure to make the mise-en-scène of that film correspond to the viewers' expectations of that genre. Nonetheless, each new film within a genre offers some new twist on the preceding formula, and those new twists may be the product of just a single collaborator's efforts.

Design

Sometimes the way the actors, setting, and decor in a movie look is the most powerful impression we take away from a first viewing. But design involves more than first impressions. Whatever its style and ultimate effect may be, design should help express a movie's vision; create a convincing sense of times, spaces, and moods; suggest a character's state of mind; and relate to developing themes.

Ideally, a movie's design should be appropriate to the narrative. So if the narrative strives to be realistic, then its look should have that quality too (as, for example, in Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954; art director Richard Day). If its story is fantastic, then its design should mirror and complement the fantasy (Stuart Craig's production designs for all of the *Harry Potter* films to date are good examples). If a movie is of a particular genre, then its design should be suited to that genre. Every good designer knows that the Western needs open skies, the film noir relies on shadowy streets, and horror movies must have creepy, expressionistic effects. That does not mean using design clichés, as you can easily prove to yourself by watching a few great Westerns.

A movie's design should also be transparent, capable of transmitting light so that the audience can clearly see the actors, settings, objects, and so on within each setting. The director counts on a team of professionals to design the look of the movie with these important criteria in mind. Chief among these professionals is the production designer.

The challenge for the designers of James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009)—Rick Carter, Robert Stromberg, and Kim Sinclair—was to create a detailed vision of Pandora. Carter, the team's leader, has designed a number of science-fiction movies, including Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) and *War of the Worlds* (2005). The extraterrestrial world of Pandora is populated by the blue-faced, thin-bodied Na'vi, a race that is physically superior to the technologically superior military and business interests that are mining valuable minerals in the area. Amid floating mountains, lush jungles, and cascading waterfalls, fly and gallop some of the most imaginative and gorgeous airborne and earthbound creatures ever seen on the screen. Using the most advanced cinematic technology to date—including Cameron's Reality Camera System (combining two cameras in a single camera body to create a heightened depth perception for the viewer)—the motion capture system, and other innovative visual effects, the designers created a world so awe-inspiring that their colleagues awarded them the Oscar for Best Art Direction.

The Production Designer

Generally one of the first collaborators that a director hires, the **production designer** works closely with the director as well as the director of photography in visualizing the movie that will appear on the screen. The production designer is both an artist and an executive, responsible for the overall design concept, for the look of the movie—its individual sets, locations, furnishings, props, and costumes—and for supervising the heads of the many departments involved in creating that look. These departments include

- art (developing the movie's look includes sketch artists, painters, and computer-graphics specialists)
- costume design and construction
- hairstyling



The twenty-second-century world of *Avatar*

Here we see Na'vi people as well as the human hybrids known as avatars in a jungle setting that was designed and lit to suggest an underwater realm. This is just one of the many ethereal jungle locations in the movie.

- makeup
- wardrobe (maintaining the costumes and having them ready for each day's shooting)
- location (finding appropriate locations, contracting for their use, and coordinating the transportation of cast and crew between the studio and the locations)
- properties (finding the right piece of furniture or object for a movie, either from a studio's own resources or from specialized outside firms that supply properties)
- carpentry
- set construction and decoration
- greenery (real or artificial greenery, including grass, trees, shrubs, and flowers)
- transportation (supplying the vehicles used in the film)
- visual effects (digital postproduction effects)
- special effects (mechanical effects and in-camera optical effects created during production)

During shooting, the production designer also works closely with the camera and lighting crews.

The title *production designer* is a relatively new one. In the classical Hollywood studio system of the 1930s, each studio had an art department headed by an executive (called the **art director**) who, in addition to creating and maintaining the studio's distinctive visual style, took full screen credit and any awards the film received for art direction. The art department collaborated with the other departments that bore any responsibility for a film's visual look. The supervising art director, though nominally in charge of designing all the studio's films, in fact assigned an individual art director to each movie. Most art directors were trained in drafting or architecture, and they brought to their work a fundamental understanding of how to draw and how to construct a building. Besides having a thorough knowledge of architecture and design, art directors were familiar with decorative and costume styles of major historical periods and were acquainted with all aspects of film production. As a result, the most accomplished art directors worked closely with film directors in a mutually influential and productive atmosphere.⁷

7. Despite their importance to the production process, most art directors worked in relative obscurity. Cedric Gibbons, supervising art director at MGM for thirty-two years, was the one art director for much of the twentieth century whom the general public knew by name, not only because the quality of MGM's style was so high but also because he was nominated forty times for the Academy Award for Art Direction, an honor he won eleven times.

By the 1960s, the title *production designer*, which we shall use, began to replace the title *art director*.⁸ This shift in title wasn't merely a matter of ego or whim; it signaled an expansion of this important executive's responsibilities. In reality, yesterday's art director might not recognize the scope of responsibilities of today's production designer. The technological advances in all phases of production, as well as the increasing domination of computer-generated special effects, have completely changed the way movies are made. But even though today's production designers face more complicated challenges than their predecessors, their fundamental responsibility remains the same: to assist in realizing the overall look of a film.⁹

Design begins with the intensive previsualization done by the director and production designer—imagining, thinking, discussing, sketching, planning—that is at the core of all movies. If the collaboration succeeds, the production designer inspires the director to understand how the characters, places, objects, and so on will look as well as the relationships among these things. Responsible for everything on the screen except the actors' performances, the production designer helps create visual continuity, balance, and dramatic emphasis; indeed, the production designer “organizes the narrative through design.”¹⁰ Of course, the production designer's control over the final appearance of the movie is limited to a certain extent by the cinematographer's decisions about how to shoot the film.

The director and the production designer control, to paraphrase film theorist V. F. Perkins, everything we see *within* the image¹¹; yet when they have different ideas about what a movie should look like, the design details can take precedence over the narrative and alter the relationship of the movie's formal elements. In all likelihood, this happened in Wes Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007; production designer Mark Friedberg), a goofy, oddly touching movie about three brothers who are traveling together in India in an attempt to bond with one another against the odds.

The designer has paid meticulous attention to trains, clothes, luggage, personal belongings, and customs, but this is not sufficient to bolster the narrative or give meaning to it.

What about production design in animated films, which consist primarily, if not completely, of computer-generated imagery? While the relationship between the director and the production designer remains the same, the production designer and his staff have even greater control over the *mise-en-scène* and the entire look of the film than they could possibly have in nonanimated films. So, for example, in Brad Bird and Jan Pinkava's *Ratatouille* (2007; production designer: Harley Jessup), which has the visual perfectionism associated with Pixar Studios, the visual re-creation of Paris is magnificent, an integration of story and spectacle that recalls Vincente Minnelli's classic musical *An American in Paris* (1951; art directors E. Preston Ames and Cedric Gibbons).

Many art directors have become directors. Mitchell Leisen, for example, began his career designing films for Cecil B. DeMille and Ernst Lubitsch, who was the director of a long string of stylish studio films between 1934 and 1967. The Leisen style was pure glamour in interiors, clothes, and cars, as seen in the over-the-top Art Deco look of *Easy Living* (1937; art directors Hans Dreier and Ernst Fegté). Edgar G. Ulmer, who began his career designing several of the classic German Expressionist films—including F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (1924) as well as Murnau's Hollywood debut film, *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927)—directed some fifty movies, most of which have cult status, including *The Black Cat* (1934). From his early career as an art director, Alfred Hitchcock learned much about creating visual and special effects, such as the powerful expressionist settings and lighting in *Number Seventeen* (1932; art director Wilfred Arnold). William Cameron Menzies was both a movie director (the futuristic *Things to Come* (1936; art director Vincent Korda) and a designer, whose most significant achievement was designing the entire production of Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind*

8. Actually, the title *production designer* was first used to acknowledge William Cameron Menzies's contributions to *Gone with the Wind* (1939), but it came into common use only in the 1960s. Menzies had drawn every shot of *Gone with the Wind*, and those meticulous drawings held the production together through four directors, many writers, and constant interventions by the producer, David O. Selznick. Before that—and through the 1950s—the credit title *art director* was generally used; in fact, Menzies won the first two Academy Awards for Art Direction, for movies made in 1927 and 1928.

9. See Cathy Whitlock and the Art Directors Guild, *Designs on Film: A Century of Hollywood Art Direction* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2010).

10. Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron, *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 12.

11. V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Penguin, 1972), p. 74.



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From director's drawing to screen

For *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, director Guillermo del Toro made a clear drawing of how he thought Abe Sapien should appear [1]; you see how he actually looks on the screen in [2]. Obviously, this drawing was valuable to production designer Stephen Scott's on-screen conception.

(1939). Vincente Minnelli, who began his career as a theater designer, directed a host of lavish MGM musicals and dramas, all of which had outstanding production values (supervised by Cedric Gibbons, with whom Minnelli had legendary quarrels), including *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944; art directors Gibbons, Lemuel Ayers, and Jack Martin Smith) and *Lust for Life* (1956; art directors Gibbons, Preston Ames, and Hans Peters). Ridley Scott began his career as a set designer for England's BBC television and has directed a series of visually stylish films, including *Prometheus* (2012). David Fincher, who began his career doing special effects and went on to do music videos for Madonna and other artists, has since directed *Se7en* (1995), *Fight Club* (1999), and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011).

Some directors make detailed drawings and storyboards to assist the production designer in fulfilling their vision. For example, the movies of Mexican direc-

tor Guillermo del Toro are known, among other things, for the gruesome-looking beasts that populate them. His films include *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006; production designer Eugenio Caballero), *Hellboy* (2004; production designer Stephen Scott), and *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008; production designer Scott). The "Hellboy" creatures resemble images from science fiction, Japanese anime, and horror movies. They originated in Mike Mignola's Dark Horse comic books, but del Toro sketched his own preproduction take on them. These meticulous drawings are accompanied by annotations that he enters in his diaries.

Elements of Design

During the process of envisioning and designing a film, the director and production designer (in collaboration with the cinematographer) are concerned with several



Movie sets are designed for the benefit of the camera

When a movie scene is shot in a studio (rather than at an actual location), the crew making a movie can give us the illusion of a whole room or building when, in fact, they construct only those aspects of a set needed for the benefit of the camera. David Fincher's *The Social Network* (2010; production designer Donald Graham Burt) was shot on actual locations in Massachusetts, Maryland, California, and England as well as in the Hollywood studio of Columbia Pictures. This set was designed and constructed to be a life-size representation of the Winklevoss brothers' dormitory rooms at Harvard; but as you can see, the principal room is missing its fourth wall, and lighting equipment is suspended from the ceiling (out of camera range). The wall with the window on the left clearly indicates that no shots will be made of the outside of the building in which this room is supposed to be. The camera is in the middle foreground, and through careful framing of each shot, the cinematographer will capture images that make us think this is an actual room. But fake as it is, the designers and decorators were meticulous about details, which one actor said helped him to better understand the characters and situation. The DVD release of *The Social Network* includes a supplementary disc that is unusually thorough in its detailed account of the film's making.

major elements. The most important of these are (1) setting, decor, and properties; (2) lighting; and (3) costume, makeup, and hairstyle.

Setting, Decor, and Properties The spatial and temporal **setting** of a film is the environment (realistic or imagined) in which the narrative takes place. In addition to its physical significance, the setting creates a mood that has social, psychological, emotional, economic, and cultural significance. The **set decorator**, who is in charge of all the countless details that go into furnishing and decorating a set, supervises a variety of specialists. The late Stephenie McMillan, a set decorator who worked with Stuart Craig, the production designer, on eight of the *Harry Potter* films, said that her job was

to bring the production designer's vision to life. She believed that the look of a movie should never upstage the actors nor distract from the action.

Perhaps the most important decision that a filmmaker must make about setting is to determine when to shoot **on location** and when to shoot on a set. In the first two decades of moviemaking, the first preference was to shoot in exterior locations for both authenticity and natural depth. But location shooting proved expensive, and the evolution of larger studios made possible interiors (or sets) that were large, three-dimensional spaces that permitted the staging of action on all three planes and that could also accommodate multiple rooms. Interior shooting involves the added consideration of **decor**—the color and textures of the interior decoration, furniture,



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Design of literary adaptations

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes detective stories have been adapted for nearly fifty movies. Some, like Guy Ritchie's 2009 version (*Sherlock Holmes*; production designer Sarah Greenwood and set decorator Katie Spencer), are set in designs of Holmes's Victorian London; others, like the BBC-TV series (*Sherlock Holmes*, 2010–2016; various directors, production designer Arwel Jones, and set decorators Joelle Rymbelow and Hannah Nicholson), are set in contemporary London. Both of these versions use existing locations as well as computer-generated imagery to reproduce the essentials of Holmes's elaborately messy apartment with its profusion of books, scientific equipment, and works of art—the true haunt of a man of many interests. In [1], Dr. Watson (Jude Law), accompanied by his fiancée Mary Morstan (Kelly Reilly), discovers Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) hanging from the ceiling. Holmes has not taken his life but instead is testing a theory of how his antagonist could have escaped a hanging. The contemporary Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) [2] is every bit the match of his predecessor in deductive skills, using digital technology—including GPS, Twitter and other social media, and interactive maps—to locate his antagonists.

draperies, and curtains—and **properties** (or *props*), objects such as paintings, vases, flowers, silver tea sets, guns, and fishing rods that help us understand the characters by showing us their preferences in such things.

A movie set is not reality, but a fragment of reality created as the setting for a particular shot. It must be constructed both to look authentic and to photograph well. The first movie sets were no different from theater sets: flat backdrops erected, painted, and photographed in a studio, observed by the camera as if it were a spectator in the theater. Skylights and artificial lights provided indoor lighting. (Outdoors, filmmakers often left natural settings unadorned and photographed them realistically.) The first spectacular sets to be specifically constructed for a film were made in Italy; and with Giovanni Pastrone's epic *Cabiria* (1914; no credits for art director or costume designer), “the constructed set emerged completely developed and demanding to be imitated.”¹² Indeed, its massive set was imitated in D. W.

Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), which featured the first colossal outdoor sets constructed in Hollywood. Other directors soon began to commission elaborate sets constructed as architectural units out of wood, plaster, and other building materials or created from drawings that were manipulated by optical printers to look real. (Today, computers and computer-generated imagery—CGI—have replaced optical printers.)

The old Hollywood studios kept back lots full of classic examples of various types of architecture that were used again and again, often with new paint or landscaping to help them meet the requirements of a new narrative.¹³ Today, the Universal Studios theme park in Hollywood preserves some of the sets from those lots. Sometimes, however, filmmakers construct and demolish a set as quickly as possible to keep the production on schedule. Only those aspects of a set that are necessary for the benefit of the camera are actually built, whether to scale (life-size) or in miniature, human-made or

12. Affron and Affron, *Sets in Motion*, p. 12.

13. See Stephen Binger et al., *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solana Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011).



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First spectacular movie sets created for *Cabiria*

Giovanni Pastrone's extravagant and expensive *Cabiria* (1914) is regarded by many as the greatest achievement of the era of Italian blockbusters (roughly from 1909 through 1914). Its settings were the most complex and elaborate, yet they were created for a motion picture and, along with location shooting in Tunisia, Sicily, and the Alps, helped convince audiences that they were witnessing history in action (in this case, the Second Punic War between Rome and Carthage, which raged from 218 to 201 BCE). Italian pioneers of set design were later recruited by Hollywood producers and directors—including D. W. Griffith—to produce even more convincing (and expensive) backdrops for epic historical dramas. Three images give an idea of Pastrone's attempt at historical accuracy: [1] the Temple of Moloch; [2] Hannibal (Emilio Vardannes) and his troops crossing the Alps; and [3] Princess Sophonisba (Italia Almirante-Manzini) with her pet leopard, which is drinking milk.

computer-modeled. For example, the exterior front of a house may look complete with bushes and flowers, curtains in the windows, and so on, but there may be no rooms behind that facade. Constructed on a **sound-stage**—a windowless, soundproofed, professional shooting environment that is usually several stories high and can cover an acre or more of floor space—will be only the minimum parts of the rooms needed to accommodate the actors and the movement of the camera: a corner, perhaps, or three sides.

On the screen, these parts will appear, in proper proportions to one another, as whole units. Lighting helps sustain this illusion. In *Citizen Kane* (1941; art directors Van Nest Polglase and Perry Ferguson), Orson Welles, like many others before him, was determined to make

his sets look more authentic and thus photographed them from high angles (to show four walls) and low angles (to include both ceilings and four walls). In *The Shining* (1980; production designer Roy Walker), Stanley Kubrick mounted a special camera (called a Steadicam) on a wheelchair that could follow Danny (Danny Lloyd) on his Big Wheel to provide the boy's close-to-the-floor view of the Overlook Hotel sets, which included ceilings, rooms with four walls, and a seemingly endless series of corridors.

Lighting During the planning of a movie, most production designers include an idea of the lighting in their sketches. When the movie is ready for shooting, these sketches help guide the cinematographer in coordinating



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Stark black-and-white lighting emphasizes a struggle between good and evil

In these images from *The Night of the Hunter*, which film critic Pauline Kael correctly calls “one of the most frightening movies ever made,” the lighting underscores universal childhood fears. Before going to bed, John (Billy Chapin, *left*) is telling a story to his sister, Pearl (Sally Jane Bruce). Raised with the Bible in a fundamentalist home, he recounts a prophetic biblical tale that parallels the children’s current situation. Just as he says, “The bad man came back,” we see the ominous shadow of Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum) fall on the bedroom window [1]. These innocent children are deeply affected by his dark, menacing presence in their warm, cozy bedroom. Later, when confronting—almost trapping—John in a narrow hallway [2], Powell informs the boy that he will soon marry their mother and become their stepfather. Throughout the movie, elaborately staged, lit, and photographed shots contrast light and dark to reinforce the impending evil that is to change these children’s lives.

the camera and the lighting. Light is not only fundamental to the recording of images on film but also has many important functions in shaping the way the final product looks, guiding our eyes through the moving image and helping to tell the movie’s story. Light is an essential element in drawing the composition of a frame and realizing that arrangement on film. Through highlights, light calls attention to shapes and textures; through shadows, it may mask or conceal things. Often, much of what we remember about a film is its expressive style of lighting faces, figures, surfaces, settings, or landscapes. Both on a set and on location, light is controlled and manipulated to achieve expressive effects; except in rare instances, there is no such thing as wholly “natural” lighting in a movie.

The cinematographer Stanley Cortez said that in his experience only two directors understood the uses and

meaning of light: Orson Welles and Charles Laughton.¹⁴ Both directors began their careers on the stage in the 1930s, when theatrical lighting had evolved to a high degree of expressiveness. One of the great stage and screen actors of the twentieth century, Laughton directed only one film, *The Night of the Hunter* (1955; art director Hilyard Brown), an unforgettable masterpiece of suspense. For his cinematographer, he chose Cortez, a master of **chiaroscuro**—the use of deep gradations and subtle variations of lights and darks within an image.

Cortez once remarked that he “was always chosen to shoot weird things,”¹⁵ and *The Night of the Hunter* is a weird film in both form and content. Its story focuses on Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum), an itinerant, phony preacher who murders widows for their money. His victims include the widow of a man who stole \$10,000 to protect his family during the Depression, hid the money

14. See Charles Higham, “Stanley Cortez,” in *Hollywood Cameramen: Sources of Light* (London: Thames & Hudson in association with the British Film Institute, 1970), p. 99.

15. Stanley Cortez, qtd. *ibid.*, p. 102.



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inside his daughter's doll, and swore both of his children to secrecy. After Harry marries and murders their widowed mother, the children flee. They end up at a farm downriver kept by Rachel Cooper (Lillian Gish), a kind of fairy godmother devoted to taking in homeless children. When Harry tracks down the kids and begins to threaten the safety of Rachel and her "family," Rachel sits on her porch, holding a shotgun to guard the house, while Harry, lurking outside, joins her in singing a religious hymn, "Lean on Jesus." Laughton uses backlighting that has a hard quality associated with the evil, tough Harry, but he also uses it on Rachel—not to equate her with his evil, but to intimate that she is a worthy adversary for him. Later in the same scene, she is suddenly lit differently—softer light, from a different direction, creates a halo effect through light behind her—because at this moment in the movie the director wants to emphasize not her resolve or her ability to stand up to Harry, but her purity of spirit.

The story and emotional tones of Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund's *City of God* (2002; cinematographer César Charlone), to cite another example, are closely linked with the movie's use of light. The codirectors and production designer, Tulé Peak, work with the contrasts



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Expressive lighting in *City of God*

Lighting plays a powerful role in establishing the setting (as well as character and mood) in Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund's *City of God* (2002), a violent story of constantly changing moods that is told with equally rapid changes in style. [1] For a playful day on the beach, the lighting is bright sunlight, probably intensified by reflectors. [2] For a drug deal in a decaying slum building, the strong sunlight is filtered through a brick screen into the creepy hallway. [3] Strobe lights and reflections underscore the rapidly developing chaos at a disco party.

between bright sunlight on the beach, the various kinds of lighting in the houses and apartments in the Brazilian slums, and in a climactic moment in the movie, in a crowded disco. The lighting in the disco is true to the source: the flickering spangles that come from the revolving mirrored ball high above the dancers; spotlights that are moved restlessly; banks of bright lights to which the camera returns again and again rhythmically, increasing our awareness that the situation is getting out of control. During this scene, Benny (Phellipe Haagensen), a drug dealer who has decided to go straight, is murdered by Neguinho/Blackie (Rubens Sabino) after a heated quarrel. The pulsating strobe lighting ramps up the chaos of the scene, and although it is perfectly natural to the world of the disco, it underscores the violent struggle between Benny's desire to get out of the terrible world he has been involved in so he can lead a good life and the evil forces that want to stop him from accomplishing his goal.

Costume, Makeup, and Hairstyle During the years of the classical Hollywood studio system, the actors' box-office appeal depended on their ability to project a screen image that audiences would love. Makeup and



hair were the two most personal aspects of that image. The studios frequently took actors with star potential and “improved” their looks by having their hair dyed and restyled, their teeth fixed or replaced, or their noses reshaped or sagging chins tightened through cosmetic surgery. Such changes were based on each studio’s belief that its overall look included a certain “ideal” kind of beauty, both feminine and masculine. To that end, each studio had the right to ask actors under contract to undergo plastic or dental surgery to improve their images on and off the screen. (Today’s audiences have learned to love actors for their individual looks and styles, not for their conformity to ideals determined by the studios.) This classical approach led to the typecasting of actors in certain kinds of roles with which they became identified. An actor’s ability to break out of stereotyped casting, when possible, was often due to the studio’s design staff, whose work gave the actor a new look.

Today’s actors, unfettered by rigid studio contracts, tend to play a wider variety of roles than they would have in the 1930s and 1940s. Although the actors’ range and skill are important in making these different roles believable, perhaps even more important is the work of the art departments’ professional staff to render the actors’ appearance appropriate to the role. For example, Charlize Theron, a versatile actor who has won multiple awards for her talent, has taken on

many different parts, often changing her appearance (through costume, makeup, and hairstyle) to suit the roles. Theron has played Aileen Wuornos, a mentally ill prostitute who brutally kills seven of her clients in Patty Jenkins’s *Monster* (2003); Gilda Bessé, a French Resistance fighter against the Nazis in John Duigan’s *Head in the Clouds* (2004); the rebellious title character in Karyn Kusama’s science-fiction thriller *Æon Flux* (2005); a police detective in Paul Haggis’s *In the Valley of Elah* (2007), a provocative film about the aftereffects of the Iraq war on some U.S. soldiers; and in a **cameo** role, the character known as Woman in John Hillcoat’s *The Road* (2009), about survival in a postapocalyptic world. Without the changes brought by costume, makeup, and hairstyle, she easily appears as her beautiful self in such films as Niki Caro’s *North Country* (2005), Peter Berg’s *Hancock* (2008), Guillermo Arriaga’s *The Burning Plain* (2008), and Ivan Reitman’s *Young Adult* (2011).

Costume The setting of a film generally governs the design of the **costumes** (the clothing, sometimes known as *wardrobe*, worn by an actor in a movie). Costumes can contribute to that setting and suggest specific character traits, such as social station, self-image, the public image that the character is trying to project, state of mind, overall situation, and so on. Thus costumes are another element that helps tell a movie’s story.

When the setting is a past era, costume designers may need to undertake extensive research to ensure authenticity. Even with such research, however, the costumes in historical films often do not accurately depict such details as women’s necklines, breast shapes, and waistlines. Hats tend to look more contemporary and undergarments more lavish than they would have historically. Designing costumes for a movie set in the contemporary world is equally rigorous, perhaps even more so. Because the characters will wear clothes similar to our own, the designer understands that we will read these costumes more closely and interpret them on the basis of our experiences. The same can be said of makeup and hair design.

Although verisimilitude is a factor in costume design, other factors—style, fit, condition, patterns, and color of the clothing—can also define and differentiate characters. In Tim Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands* (1990; costume designer Colleen Atwood; makeup designer



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Costume, makeup, and hairstyle

Charlize Theron has created a memorable list of characters, ranging from comic and delightful to disturbing and tragic. No matter what role she plays, she is able to personify the character largely because of her acting talent, but also thanks to the artists who helped create her screen image. [1] In *Monster*, she plays Aileen Wuornos, a serial murderer, who is here driving frantically away from the scene of a near-accident. For this role, she put on weight, her makeup artists covered her face with freckles, and she wore a shabby wig. [2] In *Æon Flux*, a science-fiction thriller, she has an entirely different look: an asymmetrical black wig, perfectly applied eyeliner, and sculpted, black eyebrows all add to the mysteriousness of her character. [3] She plays a young French aristocrat who becomes the lover of a Nazi officer in *Head in the Clouds*, a political thriller set in the turmoil of late-1930s Europe. In such a role, we would expect her to be chic and sophisticated, and she does not disappoint, appearing here with a carefully coiffed wig, sculpted eyebrows, bright red lipstick and fingernails, and a neatly tailored suit. [4] In *North Country*, there are times when Theron, in the role of Josey Aimes, looks much as she does in real life. As one of few women working at a Minnesota mine, Josey rebels against the pervasive sexual harassment and eventually wins a landmark class action suit that changed the workplace forever. Here, at the trial and under pressure from the prosecuting attorney, she creates a distinctive impression with a casual wig and light, unobtrusive makeup. She is hated by most of the townspeople, who owe their livelihood to the mine, and she is the victim of witnesses who lie, yet she projects the image of an honest woman with a mission.

Ve Neill), Edward's (Johnny Depp) outsider status and otherness are emphasized by his costume and makeup. Other characters' traits, such as conformity, sexual neediness, and brutality are also portrayed through makeup and costume.

Two movies with brilliant costumes created for memorable actors impersonating other celebrities are Gus Van Sant's *To Die For* (1995; costume designer Beatrix

Aruna Pasztor), in which Nicole Kidman plays a delusional, driven "dumb blond" (almost a Marilyn Monroe imitation) who wants more than anything to be a TV star. Her costumes—pastel outfits that make her seem cute and cuddly—represent her vision of herself, but in fact she is a scheming backstabber who will do anything to get ahead. In Brian W. Cook's *Color Me Kubrick* (2005; costume designer Vicki Russell), a somewhat true



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The importance of costume design in *Alice in Wonderland*

Tim Burton's adaptation of the classic story *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) is rendered with live action and computer-animated characters, all wearing whimsical costumes. John Tenniel's original drawings for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* were in black and white, but Burton's conception is in full, rich color, very much in the tradition of his other highly imaginative movies, including *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005). Colleen Atwood won an Oscar for her design of the costumes, including those of the principal characters: [1] the Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter), [2] the White Rabbit (voiced by Michael Sheen), [3] the Mad Hatter (Johnny Depp) and Alice (Mia Wasikowska), and [4] the White Queen (Anne Hathaway). Each of these costumes reinforces the uniqueness of the characters for whom they were created. But even costumes as good as these cannot exist by themselves. They are part of the film's larger world, particularly its overall production design (by Robert Stromberg) and set decoration (by Karen O'Hara). Both Stromberg and O'Hara also won Oscars for their achievements.

story, John Malkovich plays Alan Conway. Until he was caught and jailed, Conway masqueraded as movie director Stanley Kubrick in order to pick up young men in gay bars. In the first example, we are so familiar with Monroe's persona that it's a delight to see how she might have looked on the other side of stardom; in the second example, because Kubrick was a well-known recluse (and not known to be gay), the costume designer had free rein to create outrageous costumes for his impersonator.

Historical films tend to reflect both the years they hope to represent and the years in which they were

created. Nonetheless, they shape our ideas of historical dress. For example, although Walter Plunkett's clothing designs for Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939; production designer William Cameron Menzies) are often quite anachronistic, audiences usually see them as truly reflecting what people wore during the Civil War. Even though we have plenty of evidence to show what people wore in the mid-1800s, Vivien Leigh's appearance as Scarlett O'Hara only approximates how a woman of her social class might have dressed. Still, the costume design in *Gone with the Wind* often supports the

narrative very well. Scarlett's green dress made from a curtain plays a major role in one scene and tells us a great deal about her character: the green reminds us of her Irish background, and the use of curtains reminds us of her newfound practicality and frugality. Ann Roth's costumes for Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain* (2003), another movie about the Civil War, were based on diligent research as well as on her belief that costumes help an actor to create character by either restricting or facilitating movement. For Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* (1963), Irene Sharaff created spectacular costumes for Elizabeth Taylor that were basically contemporary gowns designed to accentuate the actress's beauty; experts agree that they bear little resemblance to the elaborate styles of the late Greco-Roman period.

When a film involves the future, as in science fiction, the costumes must reflect the social structure and values of an imaginary society. They also must look the way we expect "the future" to look. Ironically, these costumes almost always reflect historical influences. The characters may live on other planets, but the actors' costumes recall, for example, the dress of ancient Greeks and Romans (as in Richard Marquand's *Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi*, 1983; costume designers Aggie Guerard Rodgers and Nilo Rodis-Jamero), Asian samurai and geisha (as in Daniel Haller's *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, 1979; costume designer Jean-Pierre Dorléac), or medieval knights and maidens (as in Leonard Nimoy's *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, 1984; costume designer Robert Fletcher).

The movies have always been associated with the greatest style and glamour. Beautiful clothes worn by beautiful people attract audiences, and since the earliest years filmmakers have invested considerable effort and expense in costume design. Giovanni Pastrone's Italian epic *Cabiria* (1914) was the first major film in which costumes were specifically designed to create the illusion of an earlier period (in this case, the Second Punic War, 218–201 BCE). That film influenced D. W. Griffith when he made *The Birth of a Nation* (1915; costume designer Robert Goldstein) and *Intolerance* (1916; costume designer Clare West, uncredited), both notable for their authentic costumes. *Birth of a Nation*, concerned with the Civil War, featured Ku Klux Klan robes that helped provoke the public outrage against the film. *Intolerance* told stories set in four different periods in history, each requiring its own costumes—some of which, as in the

Babylon sequence, were researched carefully and realized extravagantly. Before those films were made, actors wore their own clothes, whether or not those garments were appropriate for the setting of a film. During the 1920s, costume design became a serious part of the glamour of such stars as Gloria Swanson (in Erich von Stroheim's *Queen Kelly*, 1929), Theda Bara (in J. Gordon Edwards's *Cleopatra*, 1917), and Clara Bow (in Clarence G. Badger's *It*, 1927).

In the 1930s, with the studio and star systems in full swing, Hollywood began to devote as much attention to costume as to setting. One measure of the impact of such fashionable design work was that the public bought huge quantities of copies of the clothing originally created for movie stars. Yet Hollywood has tended to regard costume design less seriously than some of the other design areas in film. From its establishment in 1928, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences gave awards for art direction, but it did not establish awards for costume design until 1948.

Makeup and Hairstyling The makeup used to enhance or alter (positively or negatively) an actor's appearance falls into two general categories: traditional materials and digital methods. Traditional materials cover the full range of facial and body cosmetics familiar to consumers, often specially blended to comply with camera and lighting requirements. Materials include prosthetics for creating aging effects or the frightening effects so common to horror movies; hair design, including wigs and other hairpieces; and all sorts of foam or plastic materials to increase the illusion of a character's weight, height, build, or walk.

The person responsible for all these effects is the **makeup artist**. This person must be experienced in using the traditional materials just outlined as well as able to work closely with the specialists involved in creating digital makeup, the production designer and art director, and the cinematographer. They must also work with actors themselves, usually accompanying them to the set and performing whatever touch-ups are necessary. To make a character convincing on the screen, they may also fit actors with false teeth, cover their bodies with tattoos and bruises, and restyle their hair.

For *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013; director Jean-Marc Vallée; makeup and hairstyling Adruitha Lee and Robin Mathews), the two lead actors, Matthew McConaughey



Transformative power of makeup, weight loss, hairstyle, and costume

In *Dallas Buyers Club*, the vivid makeup, hairstyles, and costumes created for Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto help the actors realize their characters on-screen. In addition, each actor lost considerable weight to better reflect their HIV-positive condition. Here, these elements transform Leto into Rayon, a flamboyant transgender woman who is the perfect foil for McConaughey's cowboy character.

(Ron Woodroof) and Jared Leto (Rayon), play men stricken by AIDS. They were almost unrecognizable due to their weight loss (50 and 30 pounds, respectively) as well as the costumes, makeup, and hairstyling that transformed them into their characters. Ron Woodroof, a former rodeo rider, is in and out of the hospital during

the movie; and though he looks emaciated and sick, he retains his macho behavior. He denies his homosexuality and is hostile to gay and lesbian people. The movie is set in 1985, when HIV drugs were still being tested and thus unapproved for use, and Woodroof runs a service that smuggles and sells these drugs to other HIV-positive patients. In this effort, he reluctantly recruits Rayon to help him. Rayon is a glamorous transgender woman whose appearance is partially created by distinctive wigs, makeup (skin blemishes and shaved eyebrows, in particular), and flamboyant costumes. Leto shows great commitment, focus, and consistency as an actor who stays solidly in character throughout the movie until Rayon's death. The movie won the Oscar for Best Makeup and Hairstyling.

The digital revolution has affected almost all areas of moviemaking, including makeup and hairstyling. Since the early 1990s, digital makeup has enabled makeup artists to achieve effects previously impossible to create. Virtually every fantasy, action, or science-fiction movie since then has employed digital effects for altering an actor's appearance. Digital artists scan photographic images of actors (faces or whole body) into a computer and alter them digitally. It seems simple, but in fact it is quite complicated. If you've ever used software such as Photoshop to alter a photograph, you have some idea of how



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The expressive power of makeup

For Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008), a large team of makeup artists and hairstylists created the look of two remarkable characters. [1] The Joker (Heath Ledger) is a psychopathic criminal with a sick sense of humor, green hair, and a purple suit. But it's his face makeup that is most remarkable—that great, gashed red mouth, created through facial painting and prosthetics—a darkly comic deformation and a visual parallel to the character's dual traits of sadistic humor and true evil. In contrast, [2] Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) appears normal in the first part of the movie as the handsome district attorney who attempts to eliminate organized crime from Gotham City. But toward the end, in a climactic struggle, Dent's face is badly burned by an explosion rigged by the Joker, and he is then known as "Two-Face." This horrifying face was created by a digital makeup process that essentially allowed the designers to remove half of Eckhart's face from a digital image and replace it with their creation.

it works. When done with great artistry, as in creating the character of Caesar (Andy Serkis), leader of the apes, in Matt Reeves's *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014; makeup artists Stacey Herbert and crew), the effects are astonishing. No less astonishing is the large team of digital artists needed to make these effects believable.

Although many directors favor makeup that is as natural as possible, audiences tend to notice makeup design when it helps create an unusual or fantastic character: Boris Karloff as the Monster in James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931; makeup designer Jack P. Pierce); the self-transformation through science of Fredric March from the mild Dr. Jekyll into the evil side of his own character, the lustful and hideous Mr. Hyde, in Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931; makeup designer Wally Westmore); James Cagney as the great silent-screen actor Lon Chaney in Joseph Pevney's *Man of a Thousand Faces* (1957; makeup designers Bud Westmore and Jack Kevan); the ape-men in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968; makeup designer Stuart Freeborn); or the varied creatures in the Lord of the Rings trilogy (makeup designer Peter King).

During the studio years, hairstyles were based on modified modern looks rather than on the period authenticity favored in costumes. Exceptions to this rule—such as Bette Davis's appearing as Queen Elizabeth I with shaved eyebrows and hairline in Michael Curtiz's *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) and with a bald head in the same role in Henry Koster's *The Virgin Queen* (1955)—are rare, because few studios were willing to jeopardize their stars' images. The idea of achieving historical accuracy in hairstyle was completely undercut in the late 1930s, when the studios developed a “Hollywood Beauty Queen” wig serviceable for every historical period. This all-purpose wig was worn by, among many others, Norma Shearer in W. S. Van Dyke's *Marie Antoinette* (1938) and Glynis Johns in Norman Panama and Melvin Frank's medieval comedy *The Court Jester* (1955). Generic as this wig was, hairstylists could obviously cut and style it to conform to the requirements of the individual production. Thus one hairstyle served to depict two different characters at two different times in history.

In fact, until the 1960s, actors in almost every film, whether period or modern, were required to wear wigs designed for the film for reasons both aesthetic and



Makeup as deception

In W. S. Van Dyke's *Marie Antoinette* (1938; costume designer Adrian), one of the most lavish costume epics ever made, the French queen (Norma Shearer) looks as glamorous as a movie star; Adrian, the designer, did everything in his power to embellish Shearer's screen image rather than make her resemble the queen, whose comparatively plain face is familiar from many paintings and other representations.

practical. In shooting out of sequence, which allows continuous scenes to be shot weeks apart, it is particularly difficult to re-create colors, cuts, and styles of hair. Once designed, a wig never changes, so at least an actor's hair won't be the source of a continuity “blooper.” Such aspects of continuity are the responsibility of the **script supervisor**, who once kept a meticulous log of each day's shooting. Today, script supervisors use a tiny **video assist camera**, which is mounted in the viewing system of the film camera and provides instant visual feedback so they can view a scene (and thus compare its details with those of surrounding scenes) before sending the film to the laboratory for processing. Although wigs are still used frequently in the movies, hairstyling today reflects the more natural look of contemporary characters. Where historical expectations demand accuracy in hairstyling, wigs are used. Examples include Keira Knightley as Anna, the doomed Russian countess, in *Anna Karenina* (2012; director Joe Wright); Lupita Nyong'o as Patsey, a slave girl, in *12 Years a Slave* (2013; director Steve McQueen); and Ralph Fiennes as M. Gustave, a 1920s European hotel concierge in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014; director Wes Anderson).



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Hairstyles

Putting stars before the camera in hairstyles from, say, the Greek or Roman period, the Middle Ages, or even eighteenth-century France could threaten an actor's image with the public. Thus American studios in the 1930s devised the Hollywood Beauty Queen (HBQ) wig, which could be cut and styled to make it most flattering to the wearer. [1] The stylized HBQ wigs Vivien Leigh wore as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) were, according to experts, more suggestive of the 1930s than the 1860s, the period in which the story is set. [2] The HBQ wig worn by Maid Jean (Glynis Johns) in *The Court Jester* (1955), however, has been styled more in keeping with the 1950s than the Middle Ages. Hubert Hawkins (Danny Kaye) is presumably wearing his own hair, but he also looks very contemporary.

International Styles of Design

Although there are as many styles of design as there are production designers, film design arguably uses only two fundamental styles: the realistic and the fantastic. These two styles were established in France in the very first motion pictures. The Lumière brothers pioneered the nonfiction film, shooting short, realistic depictions of everyday activities. Georges Méliès created the fictional film, using illusions he had learned in the theater. As Méliès employed all kinds of stage tricks, mechanisms, and illusions, he invented a variety of cinematic effects. In so doing, he also invented the film set, and thus we can consider him the first art director in film history.

In Russia, after the 1917 revolution, the avant-garde constructivists and futurists reshaped the entire concept of cinema: what it is, how it is shot, how it is edited, and how it looks. The great Russian filmmakers of the 1920s and 1930s—Dziga Vertov, Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, and Aleksandr Dovzhenko—were influenced by two seemingly contradictory forces: (1) the nonfiction film, with its “docu-

mentary” look, and (2) a highly dynamic style of editing. The Russian films were masterpieces both of cinematic design and of political propaganda involving so-called socialist realism. They combined highly realistic exterior shots with an editing rhythm that, ever since, has affected the handling of cinematic time and space.

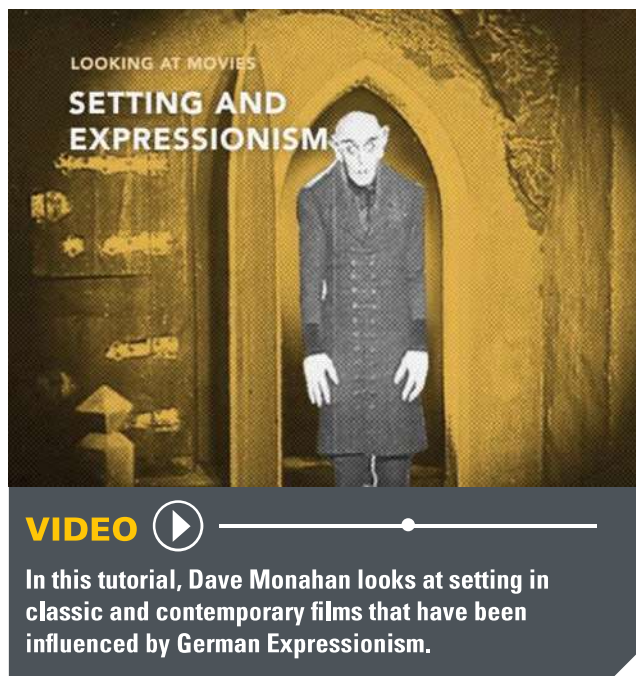
In 1922, Russian artists working in Paris introduced scenic conventions from the Russian realistic theater to French cinema. They also experimented with an array of visual effects influenced by contemporary art movements—cubism, dadaism, surrealism, and abstractionism. In the following decades, the look of the Russian film changed in many ways, including greater use of art directors, studio and location shooting, and constructed sets and artificial lighting. Notable are Isaak Shpinel's designs for two great Eisenstein films: *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), whose medieval helmets, armor, and trappings for horses rival any historical re-creation ever seen on the screen, and *Ivan the Terrible: Parts I and II* (1944, 1958). Much later, Yevgeni Yenej and Georgi Kropachyov designed two Shakespearean films: Grigori Kozintsev's adaptations of *Hamlet* (1964) and *King Lear* (1971). This

version of *Hamlet*, in particular, is noteworthy for being filmed at Kronborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark. The director uses the castle's mighty staircases for highly choreographed movement and the sounds and sights of the surrounding sea for emotional effect.

However, most important early developments in art direction took place in Germany. Expressionism, which emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century, influenced almost every form of German art, including the cinema. Its goal was to give objective expression to subjective human feelings and emotions by using objective design elements such as structure, color, or texture. It also aimed at heightening reality by relying on such non-objective elements as symbols, stereotyped characters, and stylization. In German cinema, in the years immediately following World War I, expressionism gave rise to a new approach to composition, set design, and directing. The object was to create a totally unified *mise-en-scène* that would increase the emotional impact of the production on the audience.

Expressionist films were characterized by extreme stylization in their sets, decor, acting, lighting, and camera angles. The grossly distorted, largely abstract sets were as expressive as the actors, if not more so. To ensure complete control and free manipulation of the decor, lighting, and camera work, expressionist films were generally shot in the studio even when the script called for exterior scenes—a practice that was to have an important effect on how movies were later shot in Hollywood. Lighting was deliberately artificial, emphasizing deep shadows and sharp contrasts; camera angles were chosen to emphasize the fantastic and the grotesque; and the actors externalized their emotions to the extreme.

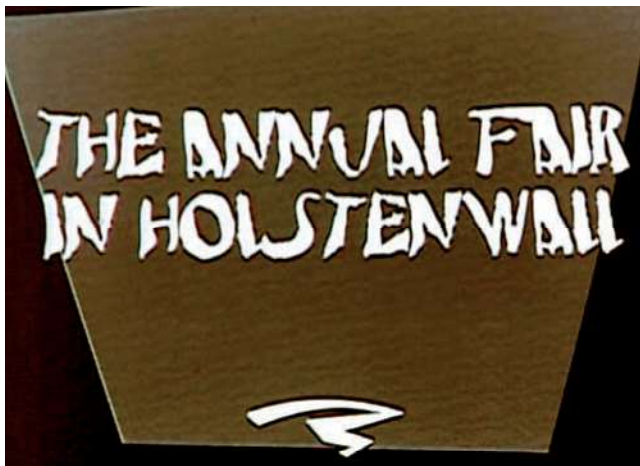
The first great German Expressionist film was Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). Designed by three prominent artists (Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann, and Walter Röhrig) who used painted sets to reflect the anxiety, terror, and madness of the film's characters, this movie reflected psychological states in exterior settings. *Dr. Caligari* gave space—interior and exterior—a voice. Its highly experimental and stylized setting, decor, costumes, and figure movement influenced the design of later German silent classics such as F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Fritz Lang's *Destiny* (1921), *Siegfried* (1924), *Kriemhild's Revenge* (1924), and *Metropolis* (1927). The influence of expressionist design is evident in such genres as horror movies, thrillers, and film noirs, and many films have paid hom-



age to the expressionist style, including James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931; art director Charles D. Hall) and Woody Allen's *Shadows and Fog* (1992; production designer Santo Loquasto).

While the expressionist film was evolving, the Germans developed a realist cinema (known as *Kammerspielfilm*), the masterpiece of which is F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (1924; production designer Edgar G. Ulmer). This film radically changed the way shots were framed, actors were blocked, and sets were designed and built. It succeeded thanks mainly to Murnau's innovative use of the moving camera and the subjective camera. His "unchained camera" freed filmmakers from the limitations of a camera fixed to a tripod; his subjective camera used the camera eye as the eyes of a character in the film, so the audience saw only what the character saw. These new developments intensified the audience's involvement in events on-screen, extended the vocabulary by which filmmakers could tell and photograph stories, and thus influenced the conception and construction of sets.

From the 1920s on, Hollywood's idea of design became aesthetically more complex and beautiful as the studios hired foreign-born directors and art directors (e.g., Alfred Hitchcock, Erich von Stroheim, F. W. Murnau). In the early 1930s, some talented filmmakers fled the Nazis and went to work in California (Karl Freund, Fritz



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Expressionism

Highly stylized sets and **intertitles (insert titles)** added to the radical look of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, as in the following examples taken from the 1996 release of the restored movie. Image [1] is an abstract graphic intertitle—"The Annual Fair in Holstenwall"—tinted in beige, white, and brown; it immediately precedes image [2], an icy blue-tinted drawing that exaggerates the shape and height of the mountain town. Image [3] is also an abstract graphic—"Night"—tinted white, gray, and green, which precedes [4], another icy blue-tinted shot of a man asleep in his bed. In a convention used throughout the movie, the walls behind his bed are not actual walls but a painted image of them in a distorted perspective tinted in black, white, and gray. Rose-colored tints are used in other images. Such conventions ushered in an era of expressionist cinematography, design, and mise-en-scène in the United States and elsewhere. That influence is clear in, for example, Charles D. Hall's designs for James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), Jack Otterson's designs for Rowland V. Lee's *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), Van Nest Polglase and Perry Ferguson's designs for Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), and the designs of countless film noirs.



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The powerful influence of German Expressionist design

The color design of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* influenced many movies, including Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977; production designer Giuseppe Bassan). The plot of this popular slasher movie concerns Suzy Bannion (Jessica Harper), a young American ballet student who is studying at a supposedly prestigious German dance academy. She soon realizes that life there is not what she expected, for it includes murders, bizarre behavior, weird apparitions and noises, and an erratic director and ballet mistress. When Suzy investigates, she learns that a witches' coven rules the house and that they have tagged her for murder. Much like *Caligari*, in which Wiene used hand-tinted colors to externalize emotions, in *Suspiria* Argento saturated his shots (fifty-seven years after *Caligari*) with deep Technicolor reds and blues. In [1], these colors transform Suzy's paranoid fears into a surrealist stage setting. In [2], we see her escape this claustrophobic mise-en-scène as it collapses around her.



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Camera use in *The Last Laugh*

F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (1924) is one of the most poignant, yet ultimately happy movies ever made. Emil Jannings plays an aging, weary hotel doorman who is demoted to the job of men's washroom porter; in the process, he is stripped of his magnificent uniform coat and given a simple white jacket to wear. Because the character has no name, we can assume that he is "everyman." With great sensitivity to this man's predicament, Murnau pays careful attention to camera point of view as he photographs the character's descent from a job of great dignity to one of humiliation. The drama begins when the hotel manager notices that the doorman is so weary that he has to sit down and rest. [1] From the manager's point of view, the camera looks through the glass revolving doors and sees the resplendent doorman formally greeting a guest; however, the manager has previously decided that the doorman is too old and tired to continue bearing these responsibilities. [2] Later, in the manager's office, from the manager's point of view, we see an assistant remove the doorman's symbolic coat—a shameful moment in which the old man's pride is stripped away from him, like the skin being flayed from an animal. [3] Still later, because the doorman does not want to be seen by anyone now, Murnau uses an objective camera to show us his descent to the basement to begin his new position; notice that, in contrast to image [1], the former doorman cowers in fear of being seen. [4] Once he is in the new job, because he is tired and weary here (just as he was when the manager decided to demote him), the former doorman dozes while holding a towel for a hotel guest, from whose point of view (through a mirror) this shot is photographed. Thus, with the exception of image [3], we see only what the characters see. The movie's title refers to the fact that, at the last moment, the doorman (through a plot twist you'll have to see to appreciate) becomes a rich man, returns to the hotel to dine, and has the last laugh.

Lang, Billy Wilder). Viennese-born von Stroheim—like D. W. Griffith and Orson Welles, a director, screenwriter, designer, and actor—was a master of realistic design in such movies as *Queen Kelly* (1929; art director Harold Miles). His demands for full-scale sets and lavish interiors cost millions to realize. That factor, in addition to his egotistical and tyrannical behavior on the set, led to his early retirement.

We need look no further than the extraordinary settings and costumes for *Queen Kelly* to understand von Stroheim's reputation as a perfectionist. In one scene, a banquet is given to announce a royal wedding. Most directors would have used a medium shot to show the splendidly dressed royal couple-to-be and enough guests sitting near them to suggest a much larger party. Not von Stroheim. After the announcement, he cuts to a reaction shot of the dinner guests, a very long shot that includes perhaps 100 people (guests and servants, all extras, appropriately costumed) in a lavish hall and a magnificent banquet table set with huge candelabra, china, silver, serving pieces, and flowers. The movie's producer and star, the legendary Gloria Swanson, said of this scene's extravagant cost, "Real caviar, real champagne to be sure."¹⁶ Von Stroheim had a major influence on movie realism in general and, as can be seen in movies as diverse as Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954; production designer Richard Day), Sergei Bondarchuk's *War and Peace* (1967; production designers Mikhail Bogdanov, Aleksandr Dikhtyar, Said Menyalshchikov, and Gennadi Myasnikov), and Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* (1993; production designer Dante Ferretti).

Other pioneering art directors who emigrated from Europe to Hollywood include German-born Hans Dreier, whose design career includes such memorable achievements as Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) and Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950; co-art director John Meehan). Irish-born Cedric Gibbons supervised MGM's impressive art department for thirty-two years and, as supervisor, received screen credit as art director for hundreds of movies, even though his staff (who received other screen credit) did the actual work. He won eleven Oscars for Best Art Direction and was responsible for the studio's rich, glossy look in such movies as Edmund Goulding's *Grand Hotel* (1932), Ernst Lubitsch's *The Merry Widow* (1934), and W. S. Van



Narrative drives design in *Queen Kelly*

Ideally, the director and production designer (or art director) collaborate on creating a design scheme that is appropriate to the narrative. The art director for Erich von Stroheim's *Queen Kelly* (1929)—essentially a storybook romance—was nominally Harold Miles, but it's clear that von Stroheim, the consummate perfectionist, had his usual say about the overall look of the *mise-en-scène*. His extravagance forced producer-star Gloria Swanson to fire him. It was further obvious to the studio that, in the midst of the transition to sound, he was no longer in touch with what audiences wanted. Here, the art director's work serves the narrative with designs that are both appropriate and visually inseparable from it.

Dyke's *Marie Antoinette* (1938).¹⁷ German-born Robert Siodmak had a distinctive talent for making great movies with MGM's superlative look, including *The Spiral Staircase* (1945; art directors Albert S. D'Agostino and Jack Okey), a suspenseful murder mystery set in a stylish, elaborate Victorian mansion.

The list of great Hollywood art directors and production designers is a long one, and it's impossible to include all of them. However, the names of certain production designers stand out. Mark-Lee Kirk (Orson Welles's *The Magnificent Ambersons*, 1942), Richard Sylbert (Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, 1974), Ken Adam (Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, 1975), Tim Yip (Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, 2000), Grant Major (Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, 2001–3), Gemma Jackson (Marc Forster's *Finding Neverland*, 2004), Sarah Greenwood (Joe Wright's *Atonement*, 2007), Dante Ferretti (Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain*, 2003), and Jack Fisk (Paul Thomas Anderson's

16. See the interview with Gloria Swanson on the Kino Video DVD release of the movie (2003).

17. For a list of movies notable for their design, see "A Canon for Art Direction" in Affron and Affron, *Sets in Motion*, pp. 210–211.

There Will Be Blood, 2007) are all recognized as exceptional practitioners of the designer's craft.

British films of the 1930s and 1940s were in most instances indistinguishable in look from Hollywood films, but the two major exceptions were the films directed by Alfred Hitchcock and those designed by Vincent Korda. Because of his background as a designer, Hitchcock created films that were always unusually stylish, including such early works as the first version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *Sabotage* (1936), and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). Korda's distinctive, lavish style can be seen in Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell, and Tim Whelan's *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940), a colorful adaptation of an Arabian Nights tale, and in most of the films produced by London Films, which was headed by Korda's brother Alexander, including the historical epics *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and *Rembrandt* (1936). In addition, Vincent Korda helped design the sets for designer-director William Cameron Menzies's stylish science-fiction film *Things to Come* (1936) and was one of several designers on Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949), set in a decadent Vienna after World War II and perhaps the most stylish of all black-and-white movies in the film noir style. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, as creative partners, coproduced and codirected a body of major films that reflect serious attention to design elements, including *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943; production designer Alfred Junge), *Black Narcissus* (1947; production designer Junge), and *The Red Shoes* (1948; production designer Hein Heckroth).

Italian neorealism, developed during World War II, influenced how cinema worldwide handled both narrative and design (or, in this case, absence of design). Its use of nonprofessional actors, handheld cameras, and location sets all diverged strongly from the practices of studio-bound productions, even those shot on location, and opened the door for new styles in Europe, India, and Hollywood. Its humanism and concerns with social conditions during and after the war broke away from conventional movie narrative and established a "new realism" in both story and style in the early films of Roberto Rossellini (*Rome, Open City*, 1945), Vittorio De Sica (*Shoeshine*, 1946, and *The Bicycle Thieves*, 1948), Michelangelo Antonioni (*L'Avventura*, 1960), and Federico Fellini (*I Vitelloni*, 1953).

Shooting in "real" locations—a seeming lack of design—actually reflects the work of an art director or a production designer who makes a well-orchestrated selection of streets and buildings. It produces a very



The Third Man

As already noted, many great movies, including Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), owe visual and even thematic debts to Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). Among them is Carol Reed's hugely influential thriller *The Third Man* (1949; art directors Vincent Korda, Joseph Bato, and John Hawkesworth). In this masterpiece of design and mise-en-scène, a pulp writer, Holly Martins (Joseph Cotten), finds himself in a shadowy, angular, mazelike Vienna. Because Martins's investigation into the mysterious death of a long-lost friend yields as much deceit as truth, the city becomes not just a backdrop but a kind of major character, the troubled Martins's alter ego. The film's climactic chase scene—set in the labyrinthine sewer system, with bright lights revealing the sweating tunnel walls and police officers splashing through the dark waters—is one of the most memorable nightmare visions in movie history. That Harry Lime, the subject of the police chase, is played by Orson Welles has led some viewers to regard *The Third Man* as an homage to both *Dr. Caligari* and Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941). Indeed, because of its characteristically Wellesian "look," some other viewers mistakenly think Welles directed it.

definite look and feel, a mise-en-scène as recognizable as the most elaborately designed picture. This approach has been influential in the design of countless films in Hollywood, where after 1950 the increasing production of stories set in real locations owed much to postwar Italian cinema. It was also notably influential in India, where Satyajit Ray, that country's most distinctive stylist, was deeply influenced by *The Bicycle Thieves* in making his classic "Apu" trilogy: *Pather Panchali* (1955), *The Unvanquished* (1956), and *The World of Apu* (1959).

Art direction and design are important elements in the films of the three Japanese directors best known in the West: Akira Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Yasujiro Ozu. Yoshirô Muraki and Shinobu Muraki's design brings visual simplicity and dramatic power to



Italian neorealism

Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thieves* (1948) is perhaps the best-loved movie from Italy's neorealist period, in part because its simple story speaks to many people by focusing on the details and chance events of ordinary lives. As Antonio Ricci (Lamberto Maggiorani) and his son Bruno (Enzo Staiola) pursue an old man who can identify the thief of Antonio's bicycle, for example, a rainstorm delays them and enables the old man to get away. The rainstorm was real, and the scene was filmed on location.

Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), for example. In Mizoguchi's *Sansho the Bailiff* (1954), Kisaku Ito and Shozaburo Nakajima's beautiful design is both poetic and realistic. Design credits seldom appear on Ozu's films, but we can discern a consistent visual style, austere and beautifully balanced in composition, in many of his films, including *An Autumn Afternoon* (1962) and *Late Spring* (1949). This style is based in part on Japanese culture itself—on the way Ozu's contemporaries lived, designed their houses and furniture, and ate their meals—and is therefore not exportable.

In India, the films of Satyajit Ray, who was successful as a graphic designer before he turned to film directing, are noted for their adherence to the principles of Italian neorealism, particularly the emphasis on shooting in real locations. But Ray was also influenced by the movies of Jean Renoir and John Ford. It is one reason his movies stand out from the traditional Indian cinema, which, like that of Japan or China, mostly reflects the uniqueness of its culture and so is not particularly influential on the filmmaking of other countries. Ray is highly esteemed by audiences and fellow film directors for his mastery of design details that reveal setting, a character's state of mind, and mood in such films as *The Music Room* (1958), *The Goddess* (1960), *Charulata* (1964), and *The Home and the World* (1984).



One type of Japanese mise-en-scène

A distinctive feature of many of Yasujiro Ozu's movies, including *Late Spring* (1949; art director Tatsuo Hamada), from which this image is taken, is the low but level camera angle that seems to imply the presence of a houseguest sitting on a traditional Japanese floor mat. The resulting mise-en-scène is intimate, relaxed, and generally very still.

Chinese films display diverse visual styles. In the People's Republic of China, distinctive directors include Kaige Chen (*Yellow Earth*, 1984) and Yimou Zhang, whose films *Red Sorghum* (1987) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) exploit color in impressive ways. In Hong Kong, a new cinema emerged in the 1960s characterized by its focus on the local Cantonese culture and on technological sophistication rather than style. Its distinctive achievements include Ann Hui's political *Ordinary Heroes* (1999); Hark Tsui's epic *Peking Opera Blues* (1986); and John Woo's superviolent *The Killer* (1989), which had a strong influence on director Quentin Tarantino and others.

Several important directors have emerged from Taiwan, including Edward Yang, whose *That Day, on the Beach* (1983) reflects Antonioni's austere style; and Hsiao-hsien Hou, whose *A City of Sadness* (1989) adheres to a more traditional Chinese cinematic style. Most famous internationally is Ang Lee, whose early films include *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994). Since crossing over into mainstream Western film production, Lee has made movies set in utterly disparate worlds: *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), based on the 1811 novel by English writer Jane Austen; *The Ice Storm* (1997), based on the 1994 novel by American writer Rick Moody; and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden*

Dragon (2000), a Chinese love story told in the highly kinetic style reminiscent of Hong Kong martial arts films. Each of these movies displays a mastery of the principles of production design.

Apart from such postmodern filmmaking efforts as the Danish Dogme 95 movement (with its location shooting, handheld cameras, and natural light), most contemporary movie design tends to strive for the seamless integration of studio and natural settings. And except for the highly popular and hugely successful science-fiction and fantasy movies, most of today's stories involve recognizable people wearing recognizable clothes and moving through recognizable settings. The design work, however, is as challenging and involved as it was during the classical studio era. And the results, created with sophisticated technologies, are no less impressive.

Composition

Composition is part of the process of visualizing and planning the design of a movie. More precisely, composition is the organization, distribution, balance, and

general relationship of stationary objects and **figures** (any significant things that move on the screen—people, animals, objects) as well as of light, shade, line, and color within the frame. Ensuring that such organization helps develop a movie's narrative and meanings requires much thought and discussion, so filmmakers use drawings and models—general sketches of the look of overall scenes, specific set designs, costume designs, storyboards for particular shot sequences, and so on—to aid them in visualizing each shot and achieving a unified whole.

As filmmakers visualize and plan each shot, they must make decisions about two aspects of composition: **framing** (what we see on the screen) and **kinesis** (what moves on the screen). This is true whether the movie strives for verisimilitude or fantasy. Certain visionary directors are known for making shots that resemble the canvas of an enormous painting and in doing so, they pay scrupulous attention to all aspects of composition. Such directors, to name only a few, include David Lynch (*The Elephant Man*, 1980; *Blue Velvet*, 1986; and *Mulholland Dr.*, 2001), Terry Gilliam (*Brazil*, 1985; *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, 1998; and *The Brothers Grimm*, 2005), Roy Andersson (*World of Glory*, 1991; and *Songs from*



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Composition and mise-en-scène

Two shots from William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946; art directors Perry Ferguson and George Jenkins) illustrate the relationship between composition and mise-en-scène. In the movie, the lives of three veterans are intertwined, and triangular compositions reinforce that theme visually. [1] Early in the film, Fred Derry (Dana Andrews, *top*), Al Stephenson (Fredric March, *lower right*), and Homer Parrish (Harold Russell, *lower left*) return home after serving in World War II. Their tight physical grouping in the nose of a bomber reflects the tight emotional bond they have only recently established. [2] Much later, a similar tripoint pattern establishes a different relationship among the men. Here, a shot in Butch's bar has Derry using the phone in the background and inserts a noticeable gap between Stephenson and Parrish, reflecting the new and estranged relationship. Time has changed their lives, and the same old patterns have different meanings within the larger context.

the Second Floor, 2000), and Francis Ford Coppola (*One from the Heart*, 1982; and *Apocalypse Now Redux*, 2001 [director's cut of *Apocalypse Now*, 1979]).

Composition is important because it helps ensure the aesthetic unity and harmony of the movie as well as guide our looking—how we read the image and its component parts and, particularly, how we interpret the characters' physical, emotional, and psychological relationships to one another. Composition can produce a flat image, in which figures and objects are arranged and photographed in the foreground of the screen, or an image that has the illusion of depth.

Framing: What We See on the Screen

The frame is the border between what the filmmaker wants us to see and everything else—the dimensions of height and width that provide the shape of the movie's images. However, unlike the static frame around a painting, the frame around a motion-picture image can move and thus change its point of view (this process of **reframing** results from what is called a **moving frame**). The movie frame is therefore not merely a container for a movie's visual elements, it is itself an important and dynamic visual element.

Framing also implies **point of view (POV)**. At times, the framing seems to present us with the point of view of a single character (subjective POV). At other times, the framing implies a view that seems to be coming from no one in particular (omniscient POV). However, sometimes the framing can be so varied that it creates a desirable ambiguity that requires viewers to reach their own conclusions about the moral issues at hand. For example, Krzysztof Kieslowski's *The Decalogue* (1989; cinematographer Slawomir Idziak; art director Ewa Smal) is composed of 10 one-hour films, each devoted to a contemporary interpretation of one of the biblical commandments. The film pays particular attention to the point of view of the camera that visually narrates each of the stories. Kieslowski, a Catholic who experienced the Communist-controlled Poland of the 1960s and 1970s, was not overtly religious. Thus he espouses no particular doctrinal interpretation of the commandments, leaving interpretation to the viewer.

Thou Shalt Not Kill (1990), the fifth film, is perhaps the most demanding of the series, both because it deals with a murder so random and horrifying that it provokes our strongest moral outrage and because Kieslowski's

approach to the framing, which employs both traditional and innovative techniques, creates the sense of a coldly “objective” perspective on the crime even as it reveals subjective points of view. Kieslowski achieves this effect by shooting the actors and settings from a variety of angles, using a very close framing so that we become intimate with all of the characters. He shifts the camera's point of view so that, for example, as the murder is about to take place, we see shots of the murderer coiling a rope around his fist while drinking a cup of coffee and flirting with two young girls, hailing a taxi, staring at the driver's face in the rearview mirror, calmly looking out the window, and then murdering the driver. In other words, we see (1) the murderer's objective actions as observed by the camera, as if it were a documentary movie, including his garroting the driver, bludgeoning him, and dragging him to the riverside, where he smashes his face with a rock; (2) facial expressions that reveal some of the murderer's subjective thoughts; and (3) reaction shots of the driver as he picks up the passenger and discusses a change of route that leads him onto a deserted road, where he is killed. At other times, the scene begins with the murderer in one corner of the frame, so that we see what he's seeing, and then the camera reframes so that he is central to the action. Because he has no apparent motive, we are appalled at the extraordinary brutality that we see. Even he seems shocked by what he has done. Obviously, the director's choices in such techniques as camera angle, framing, and camera movement contribute to our reactions, but they do not lead those reactions in one way or another. In fact, the continual use of reflections in windows and mirrors makes us wonder which images to trust.

On-screen and Offscreen Space How filmmakers envision the look of a film and how the camera interprets that vision depend on the fundamental fact that cinematic seeing *is* framing. The frame of the camera's **viewfinder** (the little window you look through when taking a picture) indicates the boundaries of the camera's point of view. To demonstrate for yourself the difference between the camera's point of view and your everyday vision, put your hands together to form a rectangular frame, then look through it using one eye. If you move it to the left or the right, move it closer or farther away from your face, or tilt it up or down, you will see instantly how framing (and moving the frame) changes what you see.

Because the frame is dynamic, it often makes us aware of the **offscreen space** outside the frame as well as the **on-screen space** inside it. As the frame moves, it presents on the screen details that were previously offscreen, thus prompting us to be aware of the dynamic between offscreen and on-screen spaces. As the film theorist Noël Burch first suggested, the entire visual composition of a shot depends on the existence of both on-screen and offscreen spaces; both spaces are equally important to the composition and to the viewer's experience of it.¹⁸ Burch divides offscreen space into six segments: the four infinite spaces that lie beyond the four borders of the frame; the spaces beyond the movie settings, which call our attention to entrances into and exits from the world of the frame; and the space behind the camera, which helps the viewer define the camera's point of view and identify a physical point beyond which characters may pass. Offscreen space has power, as Burch emphasizes: "The longer the screen remains empty, the greater the resulting tension between screen space and off-screen space and the greater the attention concentrated on off-screen space as against screen space."¹⁹ In any movie—a verisimilar one, in particular—most shots depend on both on-screen and offscreen space, and our awareness of their interdependence reinforces the illusion of a larger spatial world than what is contained in any single frame.

In *Chinatown* (1974; production designer Richard Sylbert), Roman Polanski uses offscreen space to accentuate the suspense of the second meeting between the prying detective J. J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson) and the menacing tycoon Noah Cross (John Huston) at the house of Evelyn Mulwray (Faye Dunaway), who is both Cross's daughter and Gittes's client. Cross is a ruthless man who will do anything to keep his loathsome personal life and corrupt public activities from further notice, and Gittes knows he's now in danger when Cross arrives at the house. As the scene begins no one is in the frame, but a puff of cigarette smoke enters the left side of the frame and lets us know that Gittes is waiting there. This may be one of the rare instances when a puff of smoke can produce a powerful reaction from the viewers. Although it's been put there for a reason, its meaning is more metaphorical than literal: a transitional moment



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On-screen and offscreen space in *Chinatown*

[1] Because of the smoke from his cigarette (*screen left*), we know that J. J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson) is in the space depicted here, and not being able to see him accentuates the suspense in this climactic scene from Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974). [2] Noah Cross (John Huston) enters, looking for Gittes, and sees him (*offscreen left*). [3] Gittes enters the frame and begins their conversation.

of vagueness before a powerful confrontation between two antagonists. Cross steps onto the front porch, enters the house, crosses the foyer, appears on the terrace, looks offscreen at Gittes, and says, "Oh, there you are," as if he weren't prepared for the meeting. Gittes then enters the frame, and their conversation begins.

18. Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, trans. Helen R. Lane (1973; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 25.

19. *Ibid.*

Open and Closed Framing The first and most obvious function of the motion-picture frame is to control our perception of the world by enclosing what we see within a rectangular border, generally wider than it is high. Because it shapes the image in a configuration that does not allow for peripheral vision and thus does not conform to our visual perception, we understand framing as one of the many conventions through which cinema gives form to what we see on the screen. Film theorist Leo Braudy, one of many writers to study the relationship between cinematic arrangement and viewer perception, distinguishes between open and closed films (or forms) as two ways of designing and representing the visible world through framing it, as well as two ways of perceiving and interpreting it.

Each of these cinematic worlds—open and closed—is created through a system of framing that should remain fairly consistent throughout the film so as not to confuse the viewer. The **open frame** is designed to depict a world where characters move freely within an open, recognizable environment, and the **closed frame** is designed to imply that other forces (such as fate; social, educational, or economic background; or a repressive government) have robbed characters of their ability to move and act freely. The open frame is generally employed in realistic (verisimilar) films, the closed frame in antirealistic films. In the realistic, or verisimilar, film, the frame is a “window” on the world—one that pro-

vides many views. Because the “reality” being depicted changes continuously, the movie’s framing changes with it. In the antirealistic film, the frame is similar to the frame of a painting or photograph, enclosing or limiting the world by closing it down and providing only one view. Because only that one view exists, everything within the frame has its particular place. As with all such distinctions in film analysis, these differences between open and closed frames aren’t absolute; they are a matter of degree and emphasis (as shown in Table 5.1).

Who or what decides whether the framing in a movie is open or closed? Sometimes it’s the director; at other times, it’s the narrative; in most movies, it’s both. Directors choose the open frame to enable their characters to act freely, to come and go within the film’s world. John Ford’s *My Darling Clementine* (1946) is not only shot with an open frame, but concludes in open-ended ambiguity. In one sense, its characters (Wyatt Earp and company) face an existentialist dilemma: whether to live as uncivilized, lawless barbarians or to become lawful members of a civilized community. The town of Tombstone, set among the vast expanses of Monument Valley, can go one way or the other, depending upon the actions of individuals who live there. Ford seems to favor community, family, and organized religion; his hero, Earp, arrives in the lawless town, becomes the sheriff, establishes civic order, and then departs for his own reasons. This seems to be an ambiguous ending. It’s noteworthy

Table 5.1 | OPEN AND CLOSED FRAMES

	Open	Closed
Visual characteristics	Normal depth, perspective, light, and scale. An overall look that is realistic, or verisimilar.	Exaggerated and stylized depth; out of perspective; distorted or exaggerated light and shadow; distorted scale. An overall look that is not realistic, or verisimilar.
Framing the characters	The characters act. They may move freely in and out of the frame. They are free to go to another place in the movie’s world and return.	The characters are acted upon. They are controlled by outside forces and do not have the freedom to come and go as they wish. They have no control over the logic that drives the movie’s actions.
Relationship of characters to design elements	The characters are more important than the sets, costumes, and other design elements. The design elements support the development of character and story.	Design elements call attention to themselves and may be more important than the characters. Design elements drive the story’s development.
The world of the story	The world of the story is based on reality. It changes and evolves, and the framing changes with it. The frame is a window on this world.	The world of the story is self-contained; it doesn’t refer to anything outside of itself. It is rigid and hierarchical: everything has its place. The frame is similar to a painting.

Source: Adapted from Leo Braudy, *The World in a Frame: What We See in Films* (1976; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).



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On-screen and offscreen space in *Stagecoach*

In John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939; art director Alexander Toluboff), a scene set in the noontime lunch stop at Dry Fork illustrates social division among the characters through the use of on-screen and offscreen spaces. [1] The scene opens by establishing the location, showing two of the room's four walls. Following this establishing shot, a series of cuts fills in parts of the room not seen here. [2] Revealing a third wall but keeping us oriented by showing the chairs and part of the table, this shot takes us to what had been offscreen space and remains marginal territory, where Ringo (John Wayne) and Dallas (Claire Trevor) interact before he seats her at the table. [3] Opposed to Ringo and Dallas, on the other side of the room, are Gatewood (Berton Churchill, *seated left*), Hatfield (John Carradine, *standing right*), and Lucy (Louise Platt, *seated right*)—three characters who consider themselves socially superior to the others. [4] From yet another perspective we see the room's fourth wall and Lucy, who stares coldly and haughtily at [5] Dallas, who yields no ground. [6] When Ringo defies the anger rising across the table (a reinforcement of his position in [2]), [7] Hatfield escorts Lucy away from Dallas (a reinforcement of their position in [3]) to [8] the opposite end of the table, which we see from an entirely new perspective. Thus an area that had been largely offscreen, hardly registering, takes prominence, especially in contrast to the brightly lit, vacant, and exposed end of the table.

that both Kurosawa and Ford first studied to be painters, an art in which everything has its place and is enclosed within a frame. Although they both became film directors, their painting experience probably influenced their masterful sense of composition and attention to detail within the frame.

Directors choose the closed frame when their stories concern characters who are controlled by outside forces and do not have the freedom to come and go as they wish. Design elements frequently drive the story's development. Good examples include almost any Alfred Hitchcock movie (e.g., *Dial M for Murder*, 1954), Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949), Kelly Reichardt's *Wendy and Lucy* (2008) and *Meek's Cutoff* (2011), or King Vidor's silent classic *The Crowd* (1928).

Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (2010) is a closed movie in which the design and framing are more important than the characters. The highly melodramatic story concerns a young ballet dancer, Nina Sayers (Natalie Portman), an artist with great technique who cannot become a prima ballerina until she realizes her soul as a dancer. In this case, that means fighting her demons, primarily her psychotic view of her world and colleagues. Her struggle occurs within a production design that is very claustrophobic; virtually all of its major scenes are shot in interiors: backstage, stage, dressing room, corridors, and Nina's bedroom at home. Despite her ambitions and her talent, Nina (as well as the other young dancers) seems caught in this labyrinth of spaces that define their world. Indeed, they are trapped in a world where their success is often determined more by destiny than talent. While some of the dancers are comfortable with this reality, those who aren't try to destroy it at their peril. Thomas Leroy (Vincent Cassel), the hard-driving director of the ballet company, controls

the repetitive rehearsals with an iron hand, calling our attention to the movie director's manipulation of the students' confining world.

An interesting paradox occurred when two different directors from different countries—Jean Renoir (France) and Akira Kurosawa (Japan)—each made their own cinematic adaptation of Russian writer Maxim Gorky's play *The Lower Depths* (1902). Gorky's work gives a pessimistic, dark view of lower-class Russians who share a boarding house, the principal setting of the play. In his 1936 version, Renoir, who generally favors the open frame, sets the story in a Parisian flophouse and allows his characters to move freely in and out of the frame as well as out of the house and into the city beyond. Kurosawa, in his 1957 version, sets the story in seventeenth-century



VIDEO



In this tutorial, Dave Monahan discusses the core principles of composition within the frame.

Japan and, like Gorky, keeps the action inside the house. Renoir emphasizes that man's life is left to free will and chance, while Kurosawa allows his characters little freedom. Renoir's open frame is more relevant to the modern audience, while Kurosawa's relatively closed frame seems claustrophobic by contrast, perhaps reflecting the hierarchical society of the time.

The formulaic nature of these distinctions does not mean that you should automatically categorize movies that you see and analyze as open or closed, for there will be no profit in that. Instead, you can recognize the characteristics of each type of film (as described in Table 5.1), and you can be aware that certain directors consistently depict open worlds (Jean Renoir, John Ford, Robert Altman) while others are equally consistent in making closed ones (Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Lars von Trier).

Kinesis: What Moves on the Screen

Because the movies move in so many ways, our perception of kinesis (movement) in a movie is influenced by several different factors at once—including the use

of music in an otherwise static scene. But we perceive movement mainly when we see (1) the movement of objects and characters within the frame and (2) the apparent movement of the frame itself (the moving frame). Although their particular applications will differ depending on the specific work, both types of movement are part of any movie's composition and mise-en-scène.

Of course, all movies move, but some move more than others and differently. The kinetic quality of many movies is determined by their genre: action pictures, cartoons, and comedies tend to include more and faster movement than do love stories or biographical films. Many great films—Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), Robert Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951), Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953), and Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Outcry* (1957), for example—use little movement and action. That lack of action represents not only a way of looking at the world (framing it) but also an approach to the movie's narrative and themes.

Which movie, then, is the more cinematic—one that moves all the time or one that moves hardly at all? Because kinetic power is only one of the inherent creative



Kinesis in action films

Throughout the history of film—from the swashbuckling of Hollywood legend Douglas Fairbanks, to the cinematic portrayals of Shakespeare's Hamlet by Laurence Olivier, Mel Gibson, Kenneth Branagh, and many others, to the movie careers of martial artists such as Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan—old-fashioned swordplay has always been one of the most exciting forms of movement on-screen. Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), a contemporary update of Hong Kong sword-and-sorcery movies, combines martial arts with elaborate choreography. In playing the nobleman's-daughter-turned-warrior, Jen Yu, shown here in one of many fight sequences, actress Ziyi Zhang used her training in dance as well as her martial arts skills.

possibilities of movies, not an essential quality of every movie, we can answer this question only by examining the relationships among the movement, narrative, and overall mise-en-scène. In this way, we can determine what movement is appropriate and furthermore what movement works to control perceptions. To condemn *Tokyo Story*'s lack of movement when compared to the frenetic movement in, say, Yimou Zhang's *Hero* (2002; production designers Tingxiao Huo and Zhenzhou Yi) is like condemning Shakespeare for not writing in the style of contemporary playwright Harold Pinter. In other words, the comparison is unfair to both sides.

Movement of Figures within the Frame The word *figure* applies to anything concrete within the frame: an object, an animal, a person. The most important figure is usually the actor, who is cast, dressed, made up, and directed for the film and thus is a vital element in the composition and resulting mise-en-scène. Figures can move in many ways: across the frame (in a horizontal, diagonal, vertical, or circular pattern), from foreground to background (and vice versa), or from on and off the screen. A character can float weightlessly in outer space, as Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood) does in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968); dance without danger to himself up a wall and across the ceiling, as Tom Bowen (Fred Astaire) does in Stanley Donen's *Royal Wedding* (1951); or break free from leg braces and run like the wind, defying a childhood spinal problem and gravity itself, as the title character, played by Tom Hanks, does in Robert Zemeckis's *Forrest Gump* (1994). These and other kinds of figure movement, which can be as prosaic or as poetic as the story requires, show not only where a character is moving but also how (on foot, in a vehicle, through the air in a fight) and even sometimes (explicitly or implicitly) why.

The director and his team must plan the positions and movements of the actors and the cameras for each scene and, in rehearsals, familiarize the cast and camera operators with their plan. This process is known as **blocking**. In the early stages of blocking, the director often places pieces of tape on the floor to indicate the position of the camera and the actors; once crew and cast are familiar with their positions, the tape is removed. In designing a film, another essential element to be considered is how all the figures move within the space created to tell the story as well as how they are placed in relation to each other. The physical placement of characters can



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Movement of figures within the frame

Movies can make anything and anyone move in any way the story calls for. All three movements in the images here are in the realm of the unbelievable. [1] Astronaut Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood), betrayed by an onboard computer that severs his lifeline, floats weightlessly to his death in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). [2] Expressing his love for a woman, Tom Bowen (Fred Astaire) in *Royal Wedding* (1951) dances his way up a wall and eventually across the ceiling. [3] Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks), in the movie of that name (1994), acts from complete willpower to shed his leg braces and run free.

suggest the nature and complexity of whatever relationship may exist between them, and thus their placement and proximity are relevant to our understanding of how the composition of a shot helps to create meaning. (Analyzing placement and proximity is the study of *proxemics*.)

Ordinarily, close physical proximity implies emotional or other kinds of closeness. Federico Fellini's *I Vitelloni* (1953; cinematographers Carlo Carlini, Otello Martelli, and Luciano Trasatti; production designer Mario Chiari) goes against this convention by employing a rigorous compositional plan that involves placing the characters in symmetrical proximity. In one memorable shot, Fellini suggests group indolence by seating each character at a separate café table with half of them facing in one direction and the other half facing in the other. In *Love and Death* (1975; cinematographer Ghislain Cloquet; production designer Willy Holt), a low comedy about life's big issues, director Woody Allen shows that physical proximity between two characters can also mean the absence of romantic closeness. On the night before he is to fight a duel, Boris (Woody Allen) asks Sonja (Diane Keaton) to marry him. They are very tightly framed in the shot, and he starts intoning a nonsensical monologue: "To die before the harvest, the crops, the grains, the fields of rippling wheat—all there is in life is wheat." The shot continues as she, looking offscreen left, confesses her innermost feelings about him; and although he does not seem to hear what she is saying, his reaction is to mug all sorts of exaggerated facial reactions as he mumbles more nonsense about wheat. As he does with so many other aspects of film, Allen manipulates proxemics for brilliant comic effect.

Looking at Mise-en-Scène

The better the fit between mise-en-scène and the rest of a movie's elements, the more likely we are to take that mise-en-scène for granted. A movie's mise-en-scène may be so well conceived that it seems merely something there for the cinematographer to film rather than the deliberately produced result of labor by a team of artists and craftspeople. A fully realized mise-en-scène plays a crucial role in creating the illusion of naturalness that encourages our enjoyment of movies as spectators. But we must consciously resist that illusion if we hope

to graduate from being spectators to being students of film, people who look at movies rather than just watch them. Looking at mise-en-scène critically does not mean taking the fun away from movies. You may still have as much fun as you like with (or is the better word *in*?) *The Matrix* (1999) while realizing that everything you see, hear, and feel in it was put there for a purpose.

Let's look closely at Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), an enduring model of mise-en-scène that produces a rich viewing experience.

Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*

Tim Burton is a director who has created imaginative fantasies that reveal great visual ingenuity and a wicked sense of humor. His movies are always a treat to look at, and they offer abundant opportunities for analyzing their design and mise-en-scène, even when these aspects do not always serve the narrative well. Among his most successful movies are *Batman* (1989), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), *Ed Wood* (1994), *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), *Planet of the Apes* (2001), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), and *Big Eyes* (2014).

The highly stylized reimagining of Washington Irving's tale "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1819–20) so totally transforms its source that, in effect, it leaves the text behind; it emphasizes instead the director's stunning vision and his production team's meticulous realization of that vision. The story concerns the efforts of Ichabod Crane (Johnny Depp), a forensic scientist, to solve three murders in the village of Sleepy Hollow where the victims were beheaded. The ending is so muddled that we don't really know if he succeeds, but at least he escapes with his head. The movie's unified design plan and mise-en-scène create the correct times, places, and moods—according to Burton's vision—and go beyond the superficial to reveal characters, provide the appropriate settings for the extraordinary action of the film, and develop its themes. Burton's overall goal in production design seems to have been to make this film as weird and scary as possible. Verisimilitude has nothing to do with it. Although Washington Irving's story describes the valley of Sleepy Hollow as a place filled with rippling brooks, cheerful birdcalls, and unchanging tranquility, Burton's version of Sleepy Hollow is dark