

## Crafting Worlds: Film Design

(Doctoral Course offered to students in: cinema, media/communications, and fashion)

Course description:

Production design is a neglected but essential aspect of film. Indeed the chief designer, overseeing the art department, together with costume and visual effects, is responsible for much of what we see on screen and how it affects us. Yet this is rarely acknowledged, or discussed, when films are analysed. This course aims to give you the tools, and start to train your perception and understanding, to see film as visual (and auditory) composition. We will range eclectically across films that are self-evidently 'designed' and those that appear not to be (but are), drawing on the subject's scattered literature of anecdotes, interviews, and asides. At the course's centre is a condensed introductory history of the craft(s) of production design, followed by a review of existing theories, drawing on art history and semiotics, with due regard for psychoanalytic and cognitive insights; and finally a consideration of digitally enhanced film as intrinsically painterly.

In addition to required viewings, the course consists of lecture and seminar presentations, reading and writing assignments, discussions and close analysis (all in English).

Study goals:

After taking the course, students will

- Be able to identify and discuss critically design aspects of a range of films
- Appreciate the history of design disciplines in the main periods of film history
- Understand how to apply design theories to concrete examples, and be able to conduct independent research on film design
- Be able to relate film design to wider concepts in art and design history

Seminars

1. Learning to 'see' design in films: concept, cinematography, costume and visual meaning
2. Case studies of two 'high concept' films and their design
3. History 1: Scenography from 1900 to *Caligari*
4. History 2: Design and the Hollywood studio system
5. History 3: European alternatives to Hollywood design
6. History 4: (Ad)dressing reality: the abolition of design in the 60s
7. Theorizing film design
8. Design as spectacle: cinema's dream machines
9. Painted images: from glass to CGI
10. Case studies in contemporary film: visual and other meanings

*Reading* (\*worth buying)

\*Affron, Charles and Mirella, *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative*, Rutgers University Press, 1995

Albrecht, Donald, *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies*, Harper & Row, 1986

Barsacq, Leon, *Caligari's Cabinet and Other Grand Illusions* [Le décor du film, 1970], trans. and adapted Elliott Stein, New American Library, 1976

Christie, Ian (ed), *Gilliam on Gilliam*, Faber 1999  
 ----- *A Matter of Life and Death*, British Film Institute, 2000  
 \* ----- *The Art of Film: John Box and Production Design*, Wallflower Publishing, 2009  
 ----- package of articles and extracts  
 Cotta Vaz, Mark Cotta and Barron, Craig, *The Invisible Art: The Legends of Movie Matte Painting*,  
 Thames & Hudson, 2002  
 Craig, E. G., 'The Artists of the Theatre of the Future' (1907), republished in E. G. Craig and F.  
 Chamberlain, *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911), repr. Taylor and Francis, 2008, pp. 1-26.  
 Ede, Laurie N., *British Film Design*, I. B. Tauris, 2010  
 Eisenstein, Sergei, 'Stereoscopic Films', [abbreviated] in R. Griffith (ed), *Notes of a Film Director*,  
 Dover, 1970, pp. 129-137.  
 \*Ettedgui, Peter, *Production Design and Art Direction*, Celigny, Switzerland: Rotovision, 1999  
 Frayling, Christopher, *Ken Adam and the Art of Production Design*, Faber, 2005.  
 LoBrutto, Vincent, *By Design: Interviews with Film Production Designers*, Praeger, 1992  
 Neumann, Dietrich (ed), *Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner*, Prestel,  
 1999  
 Surowiec, Cathy, *Accent on Design: Four European Art Directors*, British Film Institute, 1992

#### Articles

Rawnsley, David and Blakeston, Oswald, 'Design by Inference', *Penguin Film Review* 9, 1949.  
 Strick, Philip, 'Studio Art', *Stills*, February 1985  
 Tuson, E-M, 'Consumerism, the Swinging Sixties and Assheton Gorton', *Journal of British Film  
 and Television*, July 2005.  
 Yacavone, Dan, 'Toward a Theory of Film Worlds', *Film-Philosophy* 12:2 (September 2008), pp.  
 83-108.  
 Articles by/on: John Bryan, Christopher Hobbs, Lawrence Irving, Alfred Junge, Alfred Korda

Among the films to be discussed and viewed in whole or in extracts: *A Matter of Life and Death*  
 (Powell/Pressburger, 1946), *Assassination of the Duc de Guise* (Le Bargy, 1908), *Avatar*  
 (Cameron, 2009), *Brazil* (Gilliam, 1985), *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Wiene, 1919), *Caravaggio*  
 (Jarman, 1986), *Fear and Loathing in Los Angeles* (Gilliam, 1998), *Cabiria* (Pastrone, 1914),  
*Carmen* (DeMille, 1915), *The Chronicle History of Henry the Fift* (Olivier, 1944), *Intolerance*  
 (Griffith, 1916), *The Keep* (Mann, 1983), *Lady Hamilton* (Korda, 1941), *Låt den rätte komma*  
 (Alfredson, 2008), *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962), *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), *Oliver!* (Reed,  
 1968), *Oliver Twist* (Lean, 1948), *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1954), *The Red Shoes* (Powell/  
 Pressburger, 1948), *Things to Come* (Menzies, 1936), *Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996), *Vertigo*  
 (Hitchcock, 1958)

#### Screenings:

1. *A Matter of Life and Death* (Powell/Pressburger 1946) or *Casino*  
 (Scorsese, 1995)
2. *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) or *Batman* (Burton, 1989) [or *Dr  
 Strangelove*, or *Adv of Munchausen*]
3. *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Wiene, 1919)
4. *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz, 1945) or *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944)
5. *Le Jour se leve* (Carné, 1939)
6. *Blow-Up* (Antonioni, 1966)
7. *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Welles, 1942)
8. *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962)
9. *Inception* (Nolan, 2010)
10. *Let the Right one In* or *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (Alfredson, 2008,  
 2011)

