

CTPR 465: Practicum in Art Direction (2 units) Fall 2015

Prerequisite: CTPR 310 Intermediate Production (for Production majors), *or*

CTPR 456 Introduction to Art Direction (for non-majors)

Classroom: SCB 304, Tuesday's 7-10PM

Instructor: Michael Provart

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Office Hours: by Appointment only, SCA 423

When creating any cinematic image, the two elements that limit the work are time and money. You can, in a weekend, make *The Titanic* in a bathtub for a hundred bucks or spend months in the ocean and studio tanks for two hundred million and tell the story differently. But each approach is still *The Titanic* in its own right. The two constraints gravely impact all facets of film production. Generally, films have a better chance of being finished when they reflect a good management of both.

Production Designers are responsible for everything that is physically in front of the camera. No matter how much time and money you have, one thing that remains constant is how the Art Department should function. What are the *practical tools* the Production Designer has at their disposal to accomplish the job relative to those constraints?

To that end, this Practicum will explore those "tools" in depth. The goal of the class is to give students a practical base to implement their design strategies while working on productions at USC and beyond. What are creative ways to stretch the low-budget dollars to enable the design of the films to have more visual weight and a clear reality for the telling of a particular story.

Central to any Art Department is how to communicate visual ideas to **Production** and to a lesser extent- the Art Department. We will learn to create and use the visual tools that keep the Director, DP and Producer informed of the design process. Being able to pitch and offer your ideas about story to the other production team members is paramount. A creative team cannot read your mind and know all the great things you have to contribute to the story, if no one can **see** a visual reference of what your talking about. Learning to communicate ideas through the use of key imagery, key frame illustrations, research imagery, ground plans, elevations, location photos, storyboards, palette swatches, etc. will be explored.

Another class objective is to introduce and examine the collaboration between all of the Art Department's sub-departments including: Set Design, Set Construction, Scenic, Set Decoration, Property, etc. The process of breaking the script down into manageable parts by all departments will be explained. This class will alter this standard procedure and apply it to USC productions.

How to set up and manage a budget will be discussed including the question of what something costs vs. what it's worth? How each department within the Art Department budgets differently and what changes a budget during production.

As we make our way through the many issues that weigh on all choices in the design process, this class will discuss the collaborative and fluid nature of the filmmaking from an Art Department perspective.

Areas of focus include: The Art Department team, script breakdown, budgets, research, palette and color arc, measuring and dressing a location, ground plans and elevations, white model building, Sketch-Up, set plotting and set layout, basic flat construction and set construction, basic scenic applications, etc.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to attend all classes.

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full letter (ex: A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full letter (ex: B becomes C). Your grade will be lowered by one letter for every absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

If you cannot attend, it is your responsibility to get the information and assignment from a fellow student. Do not leave me a e-mail/voice mail inquiring about what you missed in class.

In order for an absence to be excused the student must have approval from me and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

If you have an emergency and must miss class please contact me prior to class.

PARTICIPATION POINTS: Class participation is worth 10 points. You will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being best, for your in-class participation.

Coming prepared to work is also mandatory, Not having supplies will negatively effect your participation points. We share our classroom with other classes. We stop 10-15 minutes before the end of class to clean-up, disregard for this clean-up policy will affect your participation points for that day. Just as we would strike a location and return it to the way it was found, we need to start that habit now. However, there may be some classes that will run longer depending on the exercise. We will adjust accordingly.

ASSIGNMENTS POINTS: Your assignments will be graded 1 through 10, 10 being best. Your assignment will be graded on the following factors:

- > did you follow instructions?
- > is the homework complete and submitted on time?
- > experimentation –have you pushed yourself?
- > how well you achieved the homework goal?

LATE OR INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK: Homework that is submitted **incomplete** will be graded accordingly. Homework that is submitted **late** will lose 1pt. of its possible score for each week it is late. As an example, homework that would have received an 8 but is submitted two weeks late would become a 6.

Homework submitted after two weeks will not be accepted and will receive a zero.

FINAL GRADES: I will tally your participation points, homework and quiz points. A percentage will be determined by the total points you've earned as compared with the total points possible. This percentage corresponds to a letter grade: A = 100-96%, A-= 95-90%, B+= 89- 87%, B= 86-83%, B-= 82-80%,C+= 79-77%, C= 76-70%, D+= 69- 67%, D= 66-63%, D-= 60-62%, F= 59-0%.

PD PRACTICUM FINAL PRESENTATION:

The following elements are required:

- > A "Key Image" from your sample 480 script that anchors the Design of the show.
- > An over arching Palette design to your 480 film from start to finish.
- > 25 reference images
- > 2 "Boards":
 - > 1 board addressing the research and architectural style of your film.
 - > 1 board detailing your palette from 2 environments in your script. 3 textures and some set dressing imagery per environment. Include window treatments.
- > A 1/4" ground plan for your set, 1/4" elevations from your plan.
- > A color rendering or virtual model of your set.
- > Everything should be clearly labeled.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES: Cost is approximately \$75.+/- and is to be purchased by each student. Asterisked items are needed by the second week of class and considered a Homework assignment.

- *1- Architects scale ruler
- *1- 8"x 11" Clearprint 1/4" grid, "Fade-Out" design and sketch vellum pad
- *1- 9"x 12" spiral sketchbook
- *1- x-acto knife with extra #11 blades
- *1- AlumiCutter 12" ruler
- *1- Sobo glue
- *1- Art Bin Box or equivalent
- *1- Four color pen
- *1-3/4" measuring tape 25' long, Stanley powerlock
- Foamcore boards and presentation boards
- Yellow Pads

OPTIONAL:

- Highlighters
- Cutting Matte
- Electric Eraser
- Eraser shield
- Mechanical pencil
- Multiple leads
- Stumps
- Different sized metal rulers
- Drafting Triangles and Templates
- ETC.

THE COURSE, APPROXIMATE WEEK BY WEEK:

Week 1- 08.25 SCB 304, Syllabus Breakdown and Participation

The Practicum Class Pipeline

The Art Department as a whole, broken down. -Positions

Discussion: What part of the Art Department are you going to get a job in?

Developing "hindsight" and Presentation, the backbone of the Art Department.

Handouts- sample 480 scripts, 4 scripts, 4 teams

Where to start?

Breaking the script down, breakdowns per department.

Exercise: A USC breakdown.

HW: Break down the script. Due 6 pm. Sunday.

Gather supplies for the semester.

Week 2- 09.01 JEP House Porch, Set or Location?

Windows, Doors and Mould Details

Handouts-Moulding styles

Discussion: What determines a Set Build or Utilizing a Location?

The issues that drive the crucial choice of building vs. location?

Practical exteriors with stage interiors. -Matching

Exercise: How to Measure and photograph a location.

HW: Photograph and Label Mould Details,

Post by 6pm. Sunday

Week 3- 09.08 SCB 304, Architecture as story. Scale Drawing Tutorial Drafting Materials needed.

Plans- where everything starts, blocking, exits and entries, depth or not?

Elevations- architectural style applied.

The character & story ramifications of architecture.

Exercise: How to draw plans and elevations of the JEP house.

Handouts: Drafting Basics

HW: FINISH Drawing a 1/4" scale Plan and Elevations of the JEP House.

Week 4- 09.15 SCB 304, White Models, Presenting a visual idea- physically.

The White Model, how it's used.

Exercise: Building a 1/4" scale white Model of the JEP House

HW: FINISH the White Model

Week 5- 09.22 SCB 304, White Models, Finish Models

HW: FINISH the White Model and photograph them. Post by 6pm. Sunday

Week 6- 09.29 SCB 304, Dressing the Set

The Set Decorator and Set- Dressing department, -Positions

Dressing for character Development, broad strokes into details.

Dressing a set and dressing a location, tricks and mindset,

Building a low-budget "kit"

Handouts: Mildred Pierce

Exercise: Location set dressing Demo, tricks.

HW: Cell phone film Interiors. Make a new Set Dressing break down only of your short script. Post by 6pm. Sunday.

THE COURSE, APPROXIMATE WEEK BY WEEK: CONT.

Week 7- 10.06 The JEP House, Dressing a location

Architectural Style: Craftsmen and Prairie Houses

Exercise: Kit applications at a location.

Handouts: Craftsmen and Prairie Homes

HW: Photograph 6 Examples of Craftsmen and Prairie Houses.

Post by 6pm. Sunday.

Week 8- 10.13 SCA B120 SketchUp, Another way to Present Visual Ideas

Guest: John Vertrees presents Sketch-Up, the bells and whistles of the program.

Begin Ground Plan and Elevations of the JEP House in Sketch-Up.

Handouts: Quick Reference Guides

MID-TERM TEST

HW: Continue working on Plans and Elevations of the JEP House in Sketch-Up

Week 09- 10.20 SCA B120 SketchUp, Continued

Guest: John Vertrees, adding texture and finishes, set dressing.

Continue Plan and Elevations of the JEP House

Begin discussion of Layout.

HW: FINISH Plan and Elevations of JEP House

Week 10- 10.27 SCA B120 SketchUp Layout

Guest: John Vertrees,

Presenting what you see in your mind's-eye and laying it out so that construction can build it.

HW: FINISH Layout of Plans and Elevations and one Full Scale Detail.

PRINT Hard copies due the next class.

Week 11- 11.03, Stage 4, Spotting and Layout of the set on a soundstage.

The Construction Department, -Positions

Materials Used, Tools- Pneumatic and Mechanical, Kits and Vendors

Exercise: Spotting and Layout of a set, Firelanes, Backings and lighting space discussion.

The 3-4-5 Triangle

Basic Flat handling and connection of flats. Students build a 3 walled set.

Bracing of flats and flat safety, usage of "wailers/hog troughs" and "jacks"

"Wild Walls"

HW: Re-do the script breakdown, get it right. Due 6 pm. Sunday.

Week 12- 11.10 Stage 4, Flats-

Students Build a three walled set.

Moulding review

Prep of walls, Low Budget and Normal Prep

Materials and Tools Used, Building a "kit"

Seams and corners –inside/outside and Surface fills

Paint application, priming/underpainting and "mud" paint.

Exercise: Students Prep the floor and walls for scenic work- week 13.

HW: Read 4 interviews with PD's and give a reading response for each.

Due by 6pm. Sunday.

THE COURSE, APPROXIMATE WEEK BY WEEK: CONT.

Week 13- 11.17 Stage 4, Scenic Guest

The Scenic Department, -Positions

Ageing and glazes

"Blocking"

Exercise: Demo of a Basic Wood Grain Faux Finish on the Stage Floor, Students Paint the finish.

Review Final Projects due week 15

HW: Your Final Project due Week 15- 12-01 based on your 480 script and using the JEP House as one of your locations in the story.

You must present:

>A "Key" image from your 480 script that anchors the design of the film.

>An over arching Palette design to your film from start to finish.

25 reference images

>2 "**Boards**":

1 board addressing the research and architectural style of your film.

1 board detailing your palette from 2 environments in your script. **3**

textures and some set dressing imagery per environment. Please include window treatments.

> A 1/4" ground plan for your set, 1/4" elevations from your plan.

>Your Plan and Elevations, either drawn or in SketchUp utilizes one of the rooms from the JEP House as your location.

> A color rendering or virtual model of your set.

Week 14- 11.24 SCB 304, Imagining the Design and Guest Speaker

Quantifying mood and tone- the tools at a designers' disposal. Inspirational films, photographers, tear sheets, research, etc.

Developing a design concept and using visual metaphor. Inspirational imagery and research imagery.

Week 15- 12.01 SCB 304 Guest Speaker

FINAL QUIZ

Final Projects Due.

SUGGESTED READING:

Hollywood Art - Art Direction in the Days of the Great Studios
Beverly Heisner; McFarland & Company; 1990
A scholarly study.

By Design - Interviews with Film Production Designers
Vincent LoBrutto; Praeger; 1992
Interviews with a wide range of designers.

The Art Direction Handbook for Film
Michael Rizzo, Focal Press, 2005
Describes today's art department in detail.

Setting the Scene - The Great Hollywood Art Directors
Robert S. Sennett; Harry N. Abrams, Inc.; 1994

DESIGNS on FILM: A Hundred Years of Hollywood Art Direction
by Cathy Whitlock and the Art Directors Guild; Harper Collins; 2010

STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:
<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Assignment: Create 2 construction budgets. A build from scratch and renting of a predetermined set.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS:

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.