

Prerequisite: CTPR 310 Intermediate Production (for Production majors), or  
CTPR 456 Introduction to Art Direction (for non-majors)  
Classroom: SCS107(Firehouse Building in the Zemeckis parking lot)  
Tuesday's 7-10PM

Instructor: Michael Provar

E-Mail: [mprovar@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:mprovar@cinema.usc.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday's 4-6PM and as needed by Appointment only, SCA 423

Your SA is: Chrissie Lu at: [jjarong@usc.edu](mailto:jjarong@usc.edu)

Production Designers are responsible for everything that is physically in front of the camera and doesn't move.

The goal of the class is to give students a practical base to implement their design strategies while working on productions here at USC and beyond. What are creative ways to stretch 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. This Practicum will explore in depth the many facets of the Art Department.

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 parts of film production. Generally, films have a better chance of being finished when they reflect a good management of both.

However, no matter how much time and money you have, the one thing that remains constant is how the Art Department should function. One objective of this class 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. How all of the subsets of the Art Department communicate together to help shape the collective vision of a 'Show'. By exploring these inner departments, my hope is to give you a broader base of understanding about the Art Department as a whole and how you might fit into it after graduating from SC. Not everyone may be cut out to be a Production Designer, being a Prop Master or Set Decorator for instance, is just as vital to the storytelling and could be more rewarding to certain individuals.

The process of breaking the script down by the Art Department into manageable parts will be explained. How each department within the Art Department budgets differently and what changes a budget during production. We will then alter this standard breakdown procedure a bit and apply it in a different way 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?

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 'production' from an Art Department perspective.

Areas of focus and learning objectives include: The Art Department team, script breakdown, budgets, research, measuring and dressing a location, ground plans and elevations, white model building, SketchUp, set plotting and set layout, basic use of backdrops and sailboats, basic flat construction and set construction, basic scenic applications, etc.

**ATTENDANCE:** 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 a full letter (ex: B now becomes a C). Your grade will be lowered by one full letter for every absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equate to one full absence.

If you cannot attend, it is your responsibility to get the information and HW assignment from a fellow student or SA. 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.

**HW 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?
- > how well you achieved the homework goal?

**\* Please DATE each new homework assignment in your folders.**

**GRADING TIMELINE:** Generally, your assignments will be graded weekly. I try to give feedback to every student. If I miss you, please come and see me to discuss the assignment.

**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.**

**ALL HOMEWORK WILL BE DUE BY 6PM THE FOLLOWING MONDAY -UNLESS NOTED. ALL HOMEWORK IS POSTED TO YOUR FOLDERS AND PLEASE DATE YOUR HOMEWORK.**

*I will always except Homework earlier, just let me know it's posted.*

**QUIZES:** There will be two quizzes. 1 at Mid-Term and 1 towards the end of the semester.

**FINAL GRADES:** I will tally your 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 = 100-95%, A-= 94-90%, B+= 89- 87%, B= 86-83%, B-= 82-80%, C+= 79-77%, C= 76-73%, C-= 72-70%, D+= 69- 67%, D= 66-62%, D-= 62-60%, F= 59-0%.

**PD PRACTICUM FINAL PROJECT:**

The following elements will be required:

**>USING THE SCRIPT THAT I HANDED OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER<**

**>25 reference/research images**

- > A "Key Image" for your sample script that anchors the Design of the show.
- > A Palette for your film
- > An overall Palette design to your film from start to finish, scene by scene.
- > A virtual model using SketchUp of your set utilizing a predetermined JEP House interior as your set, TBD. Screen Grabs(minimum 6) or Scenes(minimum 4) are both acceptable.
- > **All** clearly labeled and ready for presentation –loaded to your homework folders.
- > This presentation will be worth 60pts.

**MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES:** Cost is approximately \$50.00+/- and is to be purchased by each student. Supplies are needed by the second week of class and **considered a Homework assignment.**

9"x 12" spiral sketchbook

"Sobo" brand glue, a small bottle will suffice; 2 or 4 oz.

Four color pen

\*\*\*White Foamcore board, 1/8" or 3/16" thick by approximately 18"x 24" or 20" x 30"\*\*\*

\*\*\*3-Button Mouse\*\*\*

\*\*\*White Foamcore board and 3-button mouse will be needed for week 5 and not needed for week 2

For students interested in being Production Designers, the purchase of the tools listed below is imperative. Otherwise, these tools will be lent to students for their use during the making of class projects and assignments.

Architects scale ruler(not an Engineer's scale ruler)  
8 1/2"x 11" "Clearprint" **No. 1000HP-4 grid**, Fade-Out design and sketch vellum pad  
"X-Acto" knife with extra #11 blades  
"AlumiCutter 12 or 18" ruler or similar metal ruler  
25' long measuring tape, "Stanley Powerlock" or typical

**OPTIONAL:**

Yellow Pads  
Highlighters  
Cutting Mat  
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- 08.23, SCS 107, Syllabus Breakdown and Script Breakdown**

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 scripts

Where to start?

Breaking the script down, breakdowns per department.

Exercise: A USC breakdown.

**HW:** Break down the script. Due 6 pm. Monday- 08.29

Gather supplies for the semester.

### **Week 2- 08.30, Seeing how Design enhances story.**

Discussion and review film examples.

Where to start?

Quantifying mood and tone- the tools at a Designers disposal. Photographers, research, Inspirational films, tear sheets, etc.

Inspirational imagery and research imagery- what's the difference?

Developing a design concept and using visual metaphor to tell the story.

Key images and latent images. Can you build latent imagery into a set?

**HW:** Re-Do the Script Breakdown, Post by 6pm. Monday- 09.05

### **Week 3- 09.06, SCS 107, Dressing the Set**

The Set Decorator and the Set-Dressing department, -Positions

Leadman, Swing Gang, On-Set Dresser, etc.

LA. 411

Dressing for character, broad strokes into details.

Dressing a set and dressing a location, tricks and mindset

Building a low-budget "kit"

Exercise: Location set dressing Demo

### **Week 4- 09.13, JEP House Porch, Set or Location? \*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\***

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: Surveys -how to measure and photograph a location.

Windows, Doors and Mould Details

Handouts-Moulding styles

**HW:** Photograph and Label Mould Details, Post by 6pm. Monday- 09.19

**Week 5- 09.20, SCS 107, Drafting by Hand. Scale Drawing Tutorial**

The Scale Ruler

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 the 1/4" scale Plan and Elevations of the JEP House and bring to class.

Purchase **WHITE** Foamcore and 3 Button Mouse

**Week 6- 09.27, SCS 107, 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 7- 10.04, SCS 107, White Models, Finish Models**

**HW: FINISH** the White Model and photograph it by 6pm. Monday-10.10

**Download SketchUp Pro/free trial/purchase- student rate**

**MID-TERM QUIZ**

**Week 8- 10.11, SCA B120 SketchUp, Another way to Present Visual Ideas**

Guest: Ryan Garton presents SketchUp, the bells and whistles of the program.

Begin SketchUp exercises. **\*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\***

Handouts: Homework Guide

SketchUp **HW 1:** Post screen-shots of your homework by 6pm.

Monday- 10.17

**Week 09- 10.18, SCA B120 SketchUp, Continued**

Guest: Ryan Garton, adding texture and finishes, set dressing.

Continue Plan and Elevations exercises. **\*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\***

Handouts: Homework Guide & Short Cuts

SketchUp **HW 2:** Post screen-shots of your homework by 6pm.

Monday- 10.24

**Week 10- 10.25, SCA B120 SketchUp, Continued**

Guest: Ryan Garton,

Presenting what you see in your mind's-eye. **\*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\***

SketchUp **HW 3:** Post screen-shots of your homework by 6pm.

Monday- 10.31

**Week 11- 11.01, The JEP House, Dressing a location**

Set Decoration: Layering the set with meaning.

Handouts: Mildred Pierce & Genius

Exercise: Kit applications at a location.

**HW:** Using your script that I gave you, make a new Set Dressing break down only. Post by 6pm. Monday -11.07

**Week 12- 11.08, Stage 4, The Scenic Department**

Positions

Materials and Tools Used, Building a “kit”

Ageing and glazes

“Blocking”

Exercise: Demo of a Basic Wood Grain and other Faux Finish

Students Paint the finish.

Prep of walls, Low Budget and Normal Prep

Seams and corners –inside/outside and Surface fills

Paint application, priming/underpainting and “mud” paint discussion.

**HW:** Find 10 Images of aging examples. Post by 6pm. Monday 11.14

**Week 13- 11.15, Stage 4, The Construction Department**

Positions

Basic Flat construction

Moulding review

Materials Used, Tools- Pneumatic and Mechanical, Lumber, Kits and Vendors  
Spotting and Layout of a set, Firelanes, Backings, Sailboats and lighting space discussion.

Exercise: Basic Flat handling and connection of flats. Students stand up walls.

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

“bottle jacks” and “wild walls”.

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

(1 paragraph minimum per interview) Post by 6pm. Monday 11.21

Your **FINAL PROJECT** due Week 15- 11.29 based on the script I handed out and using the JEP House as one of your locations in the story, TBD by me.

You must present the following:

**> 25 reference/research images**

- > A "Key Image" for your sample script that anchors the Design of the show.
- > A Palette for your film
- > An overall Palette design to your film from start to finish, scene by scene.
- > A virtual model using SketchUp of your set utilizing a predetermined JEP House interior as your set, TBD. Screen Grabs(minimum 6) or Scenes(minimum 4) are both acceptable. If you include your SketchUp model, please save it as 2017 version.
- > **All** clearly labeled and ready for presentation –loaded to your homework folders.
- > This project will be worth 60pts.

**\*\*\*Make sure the project works???**

**Week 14- 11.22, SCS 107, Guest Speaker**

**Week 15- 11.29, SCS 107, Guest Speaker**

**FINAL QUIZ**

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE BY 6PM IN YOUR HW. FOLDERS**

[Final Projects posted by 6PM on: 11.29 into your folders.](#)

[Please \*\*check\*\* your projects so they open easily in your folders.](#)



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 8:30a.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/>.

#### 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

##### Safety:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

##### Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, 213-740-9355.

Support Systems: Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call [studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator

processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed. <https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)  
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298  
[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)  
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)  
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity

and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

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The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)  
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710 [campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)  
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101 [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)  
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call  
[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)  
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)  
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC) [ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu)  
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

<p>PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX...only at home. ☺</p>
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