



CARDBOARD SET CONSTRUCTION SYSTEM

“The Peasants”

Production - BreakThru Films

Director - Dorota Kobiela

PD - Elwira Pluta

The Peasants is a Future Animation Film from the Oscar nominees for Loving Vincent, Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman. It is based on the Nobel prize awarded novel of same title, by Władysław Reymont. The scenery was that of rural countryside, in early XXc central Poland. The film was shot at a studio, in Warsaw, with only a few days on location.

Studio sets represented complete farms with houses, barns, cowsheds, gardens and in some cases with an orchard. Originally, these structures would have been wooden. The buildings were constructed with beams, solid heavy planks, topped with thatch roofs. To construct such large sets using real material - would be a huge waste, consuming time and money. I needed to replace real wood with look a like, handy to work with -without filling up skips after strike of each single set.

My main concern was to **avoid** massive **waste** at the end. I was also looking for **sustainable, environment sensitive material**, for construction. I recall laughing, in pre-production creative meeting, when saying, that I will construct these sets using paper.

I chose reinforced, **multilayered cardboard**. I like the properties and simplicity of this material. To construct (buildings) with cardboard, I needed something 3D rather than flat surface. I came up with idea of basic element - **a brick**.

It needed to be as large as possible yet handy, still strong, and most universal for planned sets. The brick was designed with cut out holes, so it could be threaded over **steel forks**. The forks we also designed, to fit set's requirements. **This simple system was our main construction.**

To achieve required finish, we printed the texture of old beams and wooden boards in variety of designs and colours, on canvas. This **printed canvas** was then further distressed.

Amount of all elements used to construct our largest set, were sufficient and reused to construct all other sets. It was very carefully calculated. The cardboard system proved to be durable. We reused all elements endlessly, producing next sets. The bricks were also very handy to create improvised and spontaneous background arrangements. We also stuffed them into a hay stack, raised 4,5 meter high church walls or blacksmith.

At early stage of pre production , with other HoD, we went away for a **week of creative meetings**. We exchanged ideas , mutual requirements, and better understood scale of our film. We also begun with **pre visualisation** of world, we were about to create. Both stages largely helped to maximise creative opportunities .

I considered the issue of waste early in design process. For years , working on films, I have tried to reduce waste & reuse materials - working from scrap yards and using abandoned objects. But only with designing for this animation film, “The Peasants”, did i have the opportunity and creative freedom to go a step further in my search for a more eco-friendly design.

Teamwork & natural greenery props.

My team was very supportive and went along with idea of **alternative** construction method .

We also incorporated a lot of natural elements and greenery into the sets. Aim was to avoid plastic. It was mainly achieved by skillful gathering and careful preparation of wild plants, grasses, meadow flowers and fallen trees.

These props are 100% compostable.

advantages of the cardboard construction system that we profited from during construction time and the shoot

1 - elements are of light weight

2 - assembly is fully manual & time efficient

3 - no need for power tools = very low use of power + noise free conditions

4 - set constructing or striking is possible even during shoot

5 - elements are reusable and durable = amount of waste is minimal

6 - compact in case of storing

7 - 100% recyclable (cardboard, steel, canvas), partially compostable (cardboard, canvas) when no longer in service





