

Overview of Role

The supervising art director (SAD) works on larger productions supervising a team of art directors (ADs) and assistant art directors (AADs), depending on the scale of the production. They oversee the art department and logistics as a whole, developing and managing the overall budget, and the different production design schedules. The SAD collaborates with the production designer (PD), to be able to communicate the creative brief, and liaises between departments and production, to enable the team to focus on the logistics and development of their assigned sets.

Core Responsibilities:

These core responsibilities are provided as a guide and are not exhaustive. The exact responsibilities in a particular job will vary depending on the scale / budget band / genre of the production.

1. Interpret the brief and prepare the overall design visualisation

- Receive the brief from the production designer (PD)
- Clarify and confirm any missing or ambiguous information by familiarising themselves with the PD's reference material
- Collate information about the period, genre, and type of production in relation to the design requirements to make creative design decisions, using various sources
- Suggest amendments, additions or alternatives to enhance the brief when required, or suggest viable alternatives if requirements change
- Confirm with relevant people that they have a shared understanding of the design using visual representation as necessary
- Establish a regular line of communication to ensure all stay on track and noting changes during the brief to drawing period

2. Research information for production designs

- Confirm the scope, depth, and specific objectives for the research
- Confirm the timing and final format for the research
- Identify the most appropriate sources and techniques for the research
- Assess existing material to check its relevance and currency
- Maintain knowledge of current trends, designs and fashions, and avoid anachronisms
- Check that the information they wish to use is available and that they are legally allowed to use it

- Present the research material in the required form and in a manner that is suitable for its intended use
- Record all sources of information, and store this with the results of the research
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information in line with organisational procedures

3. Determine production requirements for designs

- Work with the art department coordinator (ADC) to provide specifications to the production team on the space and equipment required to operate the art department office
- Suggest specialist equipment suppliers
- Review and record key information and any changes from the production brief which could impact on designs and safety requirements
- Identify and agree priorities and resource implications that impact the art department with the PD and members of the production, for example the first assistant director (1st AD) and line producer (LP)
- Evaluate key information and significance relating to scenes, locations and shooting schedules from the full script by developing the art department breakdown and ensure this is shared interdepartmentally for collaboration
- Identify functional elements, such as props, graphics, greenery, action props, or other specialist equipment
- Confirm with the PD which visual elements and resources are required
- Record information from production meetings that is relevant to the art department
- Review, update and share the script breakdown with team members as required

4. Plan and present design visualisation

- Work in collaboration with PD and art directors (AD) to produce concepts and visual presentations for the director, director of photography (DOP), producers and other decision makers
- Use any artistic visualisations, such as sketches, models, 3D renders, to aid others' understanding of the creative vision
- Use the script breakdown to reference scenes and locations to aid a further understanding of the design proposal
- Check that people understand the agreed visualisation and the scope of materials and resource requirements

5. Determine the scope of production requirements

- Liaise with set decorators, SFX, VFX, stunts, and departments who will interact with the set, and discuss how their requirements might impact the design and / or materials
- Determine continuity requirements and linking sets
- Attend reces to determine construction limitations and parameters
- Clarify and confirm visual style and intended impact with the decision makers
- Identify physical characteristics from design information and specifications
- Obtain specialist advice when problems are identified which are beyond their expertise
- Assess and evaluate design and technical solutions to determine their constraints and opportunities
- Develop a design philosophy and specification which meets the production requirements
- Check and confirm that the cost of resources required to realise the design meet budgetary requirements
- Confirm changes requested by decision makers and incorporate them into requirements
- Ensure information is shared with the key decision makers

6. Ensure drawings are created to meet production requirements

- Brief the art director (AD), assistant art director (AAD) and draughtsperson on art requirements
- Delegate to the AD to interpret the brief to identify the requirements for drawings and other visual information
- Work with art department team to assess and select methods, media, and the relevant scale for producing drawings
- Allocate the drawing work to people with the appropriate skills
- Suggest the drawing techniques to use to meet the production style and that conveys artistic and technical requirements
- Confirm that the drawings and associated material are complete and comply with design requirements and technical information
- Confirm that drawings contain information for the intended use and are completed within agreed timelines
- Confirm that drawings will hit agreed milestones from the production and convey the required information gathered from all departments
- Consult with experts and ensure the relevant technical information is clearly expressed in the drawings and other material
- Complete and store records

7. Supervise the set builds

- Ensure the construction department are closely monitored in their progress of set builds and budget
- Report back to the PD how the build is going
- Liaise with the locations department when a location is to be dressed or a build carried out
- Provide clear instructions when handing over responsibility to the standby art director, and introduce 1st AD to the standby team
- Walk production through shooting areas, explaining workings of the set, any break away areas, point out specifics areas that will enhance the narrative of the project
- Confirm there is a risk assessment (RA) for the shoot location, and ensure 1st AD makes all aware of any risks

8. Ensure graphics are created to meet production requirements

- Brief graphic designer on the design specifications, and supporting information, such as the nature, style, content, and creative intention of the graphic elements
- Identify requirements and limitations of the design process related to graphic elements
- Check and confirm that the graphic designs meet the requirements of the original design brief and subsequent modifications
- Review and sign off artworks as the process proceeds
- Ensure that production clears artwork for use

9. Advise on sourcing materials and items for dressing sets

- Work with set decorator (SD) to develop the dressing schedule, in conjunction with other departments, such as set painting, and props
- Supply SD with drawings of sets or locations
- Advise on items that may need to be procured

10. Develop the art department budget

- Plan how materials, personnel and other resources could be obtained and deployed
- Plan the format of the budget presentation
- Confirm budget management hierarchy, who needs to know and who signs off decisions

- Confirm the objectives, scope, timescales for the overall budget
- Work with the construction manager to develop the initial construction budget
- Provide visual representations to others to clarify the scale and type of materials
- Use accurate information to calculate realistic and cost-effective budgets
- Justify estimates of costs for the proposed design
- Suggest alternative methodology if the budget needs reducing
- Identify and record allowance for contingencies to address potential problems and circumstances that could affect budgets
- Share final budget for sign off and record all agreed changes
- Maintain production confidentiality protocols

11. Manage the art department budget

- Monitor and manage budgets to ensure that resources are being used according to agreed budget plans
- Identify and record potential problems and circumstances that could affect budget plans including additional resources that might be required and their implication on the agreed budget
- Propose revisions to budgets, in response to variances and/or significant or unforeseen developments and obtain agreement from the relevant people about changes to budget allocations
- Discuss any cost implications of other department requests or changes to schedule or script
- Suggest revisions where needed and gain written agreement from LP for any additional spend or budget alteration
- Update budgets as required, recording expenditure details in an appropriate IT package prior to wrap
- Use information from budget monitoring and control to assist in the preparation of future budgets

12. Procure external services or suppliers to meet production requirements

- Oversee the research of companies and suppliers for specific materials or tasks to be carried out by the art department coordinator
- Agree choice of suppliers with production designer
- Ensure that potential suppliers are adequately briefed about requirements and constraints
- Approve all agreements with suppliers about what will be delivered by them and on what terms

- Agree any alterations with suppliers and inform them of the implications
- Approve any supplier cost changes or final invoices

13. Manage the art department team

- Identify crew requirements based on the scale of the production, taking advice from the PD
- Work alongside the PD to select and interview crew who have availability and suitability to meet the art department and production requirements
- Negotiate contracts within union, organisational guidelines, or trade agreements and which are within budget
- Brief your team in conjunction with the PD, providing full access to moodboards, concepts and scripts to ensure everyone understands the production style
- Develop a work plan for themselves and their team
- Confirm everyone in the team understands the scope and timescale for their work
- Provide individuals with the opportunity to contribute to their own personal development
- Provide advice and guidance at times appropriate to the needs of the brief and the individual
- Ensure the team is clear on the procedure for dealing with problems and how, when, and to whom to report problems
- Work with production to create a good working environment between art department and production with regards to the team
- Maintain good morale and provide a supportive department structure despite the freelance and impermanent nature of the industry
- Provide feedback to their team on the overall production and its progress
- Consult with the team for suggestions to improve future performance

14. Comply with health and safety requirements

- Undertake specific health and safety (H&S) training at the start of a production
- Create a risk assessment (RA) identifying working practices and aspects in the job which may harm them or others
- Check the location RA for anything which might be relevant to their team working onsite
- Update their RA when things change or requirements are altered on set, and might have a H&S implication

- Ask representatives on set (standby team) to contact them immediately if they are asked to do something that might impact safety
- Ensure that the ADC logs any accidents or near misses and report to production
- Consider working hours for the team and ensure nobody is working longer hours than deemed safe

Role Specific Skills:

- Research and evaluation of reference material
- Manage logistics of set design and creation
- Be aware of draughting and construction techniques
- Manage art department team
- Budget development and management
- Network and liaise with other departments, acting as head of department for the art department

Other / Transferable Skills:

- Research and analytical: planning practical requirements against brief breakdown and production vision
- Communication: interpreting other's requirements and communicating requirements to departments and colleagues
- Teamworking: collaborating within own and with other departments, for example, liaising with production, construction, set decoration, and props
- Planning: planning practical requirements for sets to meet production design needs
- Problem-solving: contingency planning and resolving issues with designs so that productions remain on schedule
- Leadership and management: directly line managing the art department team, upholding ethics, and maintaining respect when dealing with others. Supporting and encouraging junior members of the team. Providing pastoral support and guidance as required

Attributes:

- Resilience and enthusiasm: adapt positively to changing work priorities and patterns, ensuring deadlines continue to be met. Proactive and explores new ideas and non-standard ways of working which will enhance and deliver the best results for the production
- Productivity: organises work effectively and achieves required results within deadlines. Demonstrates the drive and energy to get things done in pressurised situations and escalates appropriately when necessary
- Ethics and integrity: honest and principled in all of their actions and interactions. Respectful and inclusive of others, and meets the ethical requirements of their profession
- Flexibility: willing to both listen and learn and to accept changing priorities and working requirements and has the flexibility to maintain high standards in a changing production environment
- Professional development: develop an ethos to learn and seek out learning and networking opportunities, identifying those that will be most beneficial