

CATCH A BUTCHER

DESIGN PRESENTATION

PRODUCTION DESIGNER: LILI LEA ABRAHAM
ART DIRECTOR: FLORA KAKAS
ART DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT: RHONA FOSTER
PROP MODELLERS: SAM GRIFFITHS & KEELEY SHEPPARD
PROP MASTER: AARON LECOÜTRE
PROP ASSISTANT: CONNOR MILLS

CATCH A BUTCHER is a horror - fantasy short film that takes place in India during the 19th century.

My brief was to create corridors, a nursery, a doctor's office and a skin bleaching room at a hospital in India, on location in Revesby Abbey.

The script didn't contain detailed description of the sets and Cassiah the director, gave free hand in creating.

Our biggest challenges were of course creating period India on a budget (4000 £)... and logistics (imagine pulling 20 tonnes of props and set pieces across a frozen muddy field at night...).

Without the help, time and effort of many people we wouldn't have been able to achieve the level of detail in the production design that the project deserved.

My mother sew and draw graphics, Stella Fox and Kave Quinn who I worked with at the time on Black Narcissus donated several props to our production.

Paul Bowring from Fat Scenery donated and delivered flats and construction materials to my home. Film Medical and Newman Hire gave us generous discounts on our hires.

C&P gave a discount on our large tapestry print. Sam Griffiths and Keeley Sheppard who I met on Ready Player One's prop making department made our bath in their garage during their free weekends.

Me and art director Flora bought props and visited several carboot sales several times as well as doing our own graphics. We painted flats outside our bungalow in Hackney, we bought original victorian cots from all over England, and we stored most of our props in our friend's garage near by.

...And after the winter break when we opened the garage to start packing up for the shoot....we realised somebody broke in over Christmas. But luckily only took...an opium pipe?

The main creative challenge was the creation of the 'Cleansing Room' where they bleach Indian babies' skin. The script only mentioned a bath with white liquid.

We started with the idea of a big set build which we needed to reduce to something much simpler because of the budget changes and use one of the rooms on the location.

I kept on thinking of death camps and gas chambers, stories I unfortunately heard many times in my family. To resemble those imagined spaces we chose an exposed brick room on the location. The entrance room to the Cleansing Room had several piles of Indian saris - that's where the people and babies were undressed to put in the bath, the space where they were stripped from their identities.

I wanted to use a real victorian bath that we found on the internet, that cost one third of the budget! But I loved its authenticity, its strange shape and colour.

My thought behind the cleansing room was making the set out of the liquid, and the liquid to be the representation of racism. It had to be a living, breathing being that spreads and dips its roots into everything around it, that surrounds the bath and the babies in it and wants to escape from the basement and infect the world. It was feeding the institution above in the hospital.

It had to represent a creature that swallows you if you stay too long in it and digest you while you slowly become one with it.

I thought about how the liquid could become alive and organic? We started looking into stalactites, stalagmites, tree roots, tentacles and corals.

The level of detail Sam and Keeley put into the bath was incredible. They came up with the idea of sticking cut down paper straws into the sculpted liquid that made it look like it was breathing. They sculpted human hair and teeth into it. The bath always looked wet and gooey. They stripped down real branches and roots to awesome shapes to spread them on the wall around the bath.

The location was very run down but also preserved much of its original features, so we could fully embrace its decay. Walls with beautiful textures we featured.

With the mix of British and Indian props and heavy use of graphics we hoped to achieve India on a budget.

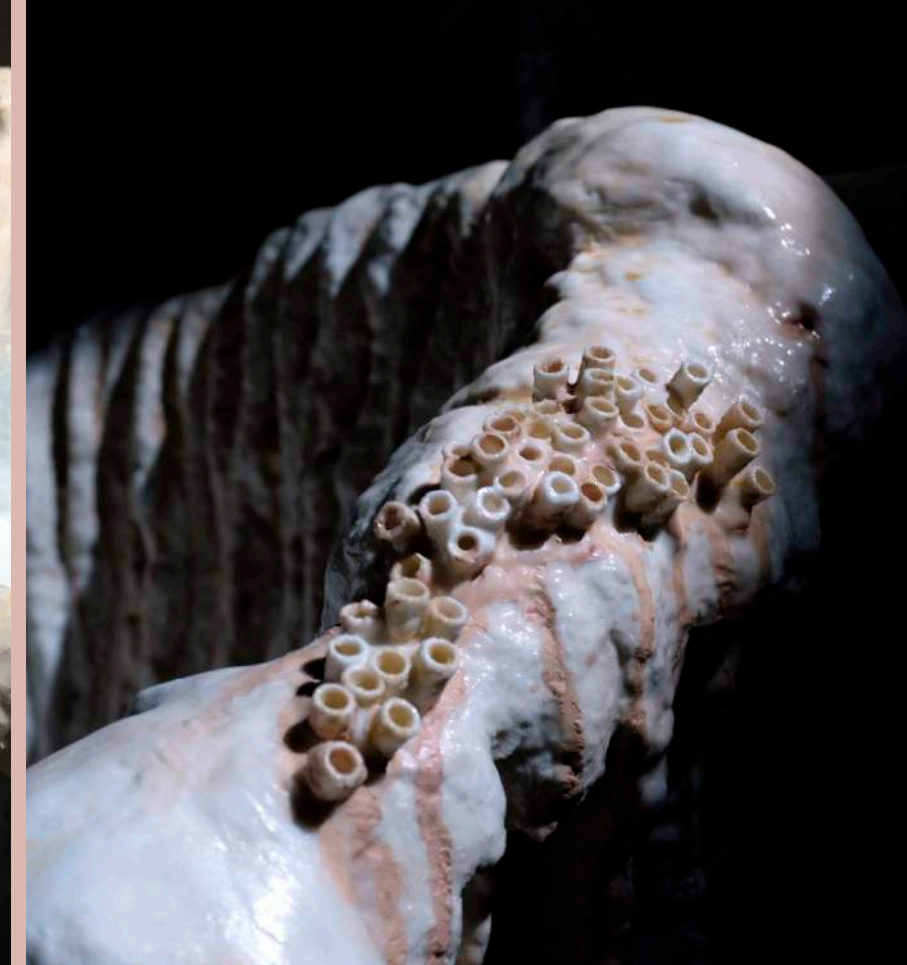
British props were practical and medical (metal, glass, taxidermy), Indian props were spiritual (shrines, statues) and caring (soft fabrics). We researched for images from the public domain from The Wellcome Gallery Collection's Archives and from printed reference books. Pinterest was banned. We used Hindi writing wherever it was possible.

This job was an incredible team effort. We put everything into it that we learnt over years of working on big productions and I was amazed by the dedication and passion of the art department and all the people who helped us.

We hope you feel the same.

BFDG AWARDS
2021

THE CLEANSING ROOM - SKIN BLEACHING ROOM



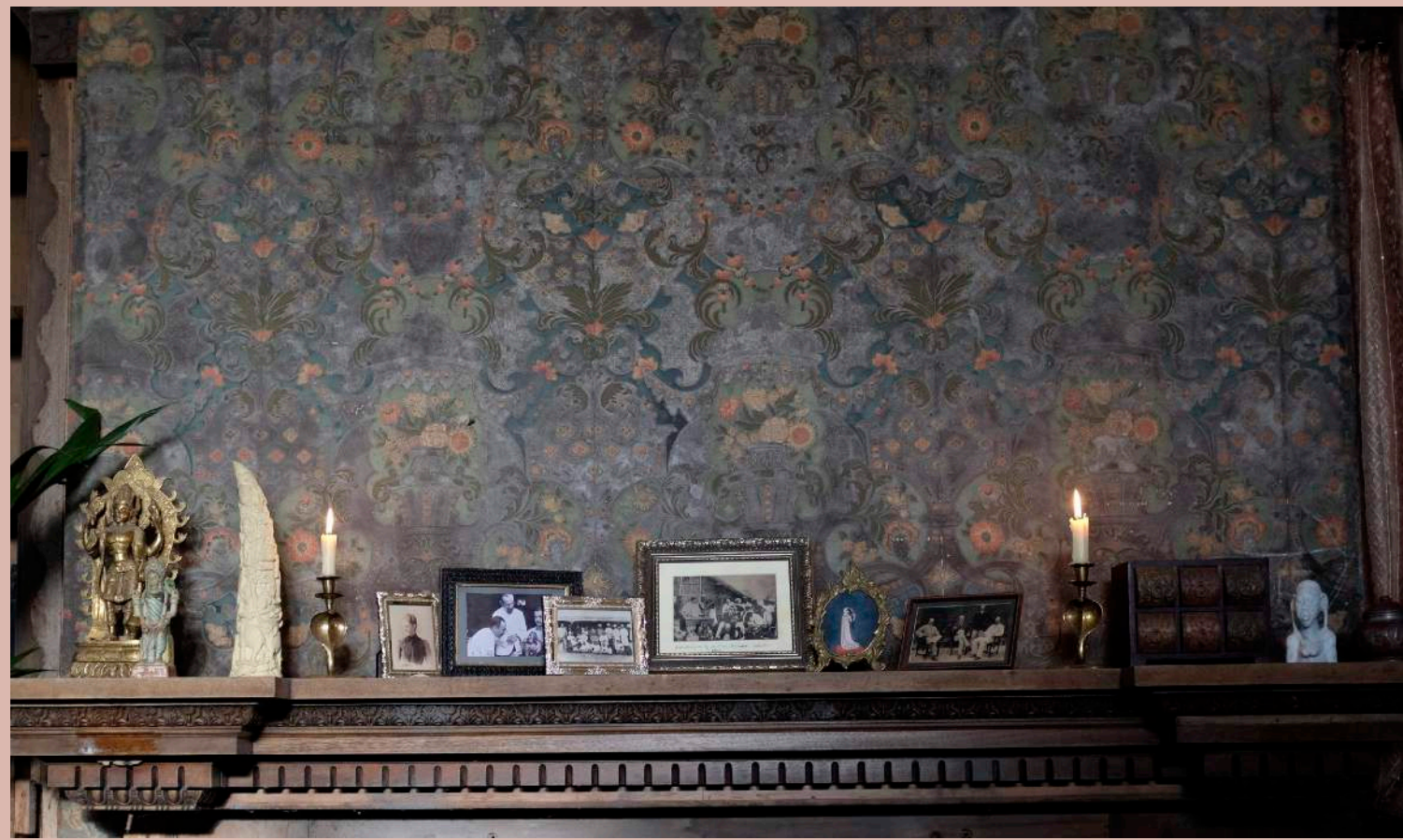
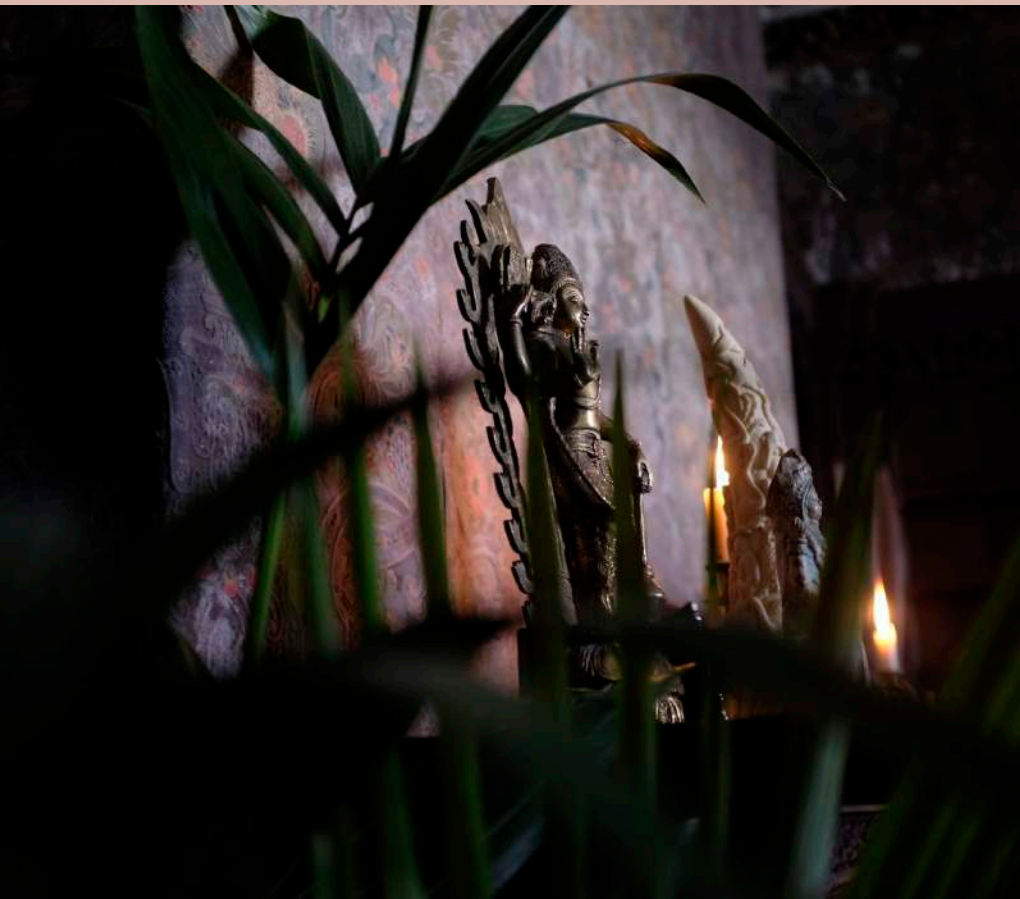
THE CLEANSING ROOM - SKIN BLEACHING ROOM



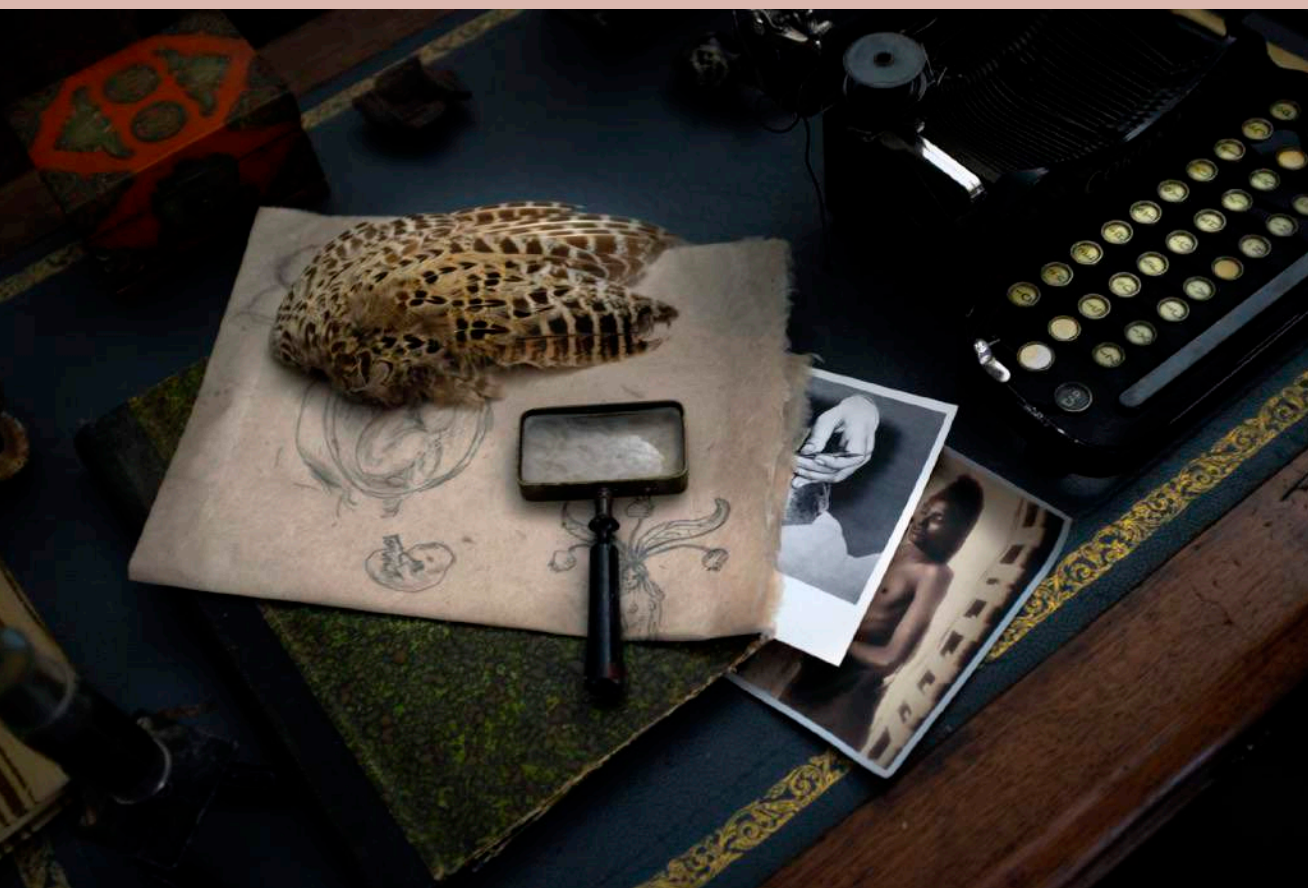
THE NURSERY



DOCTOR'S OFFICE



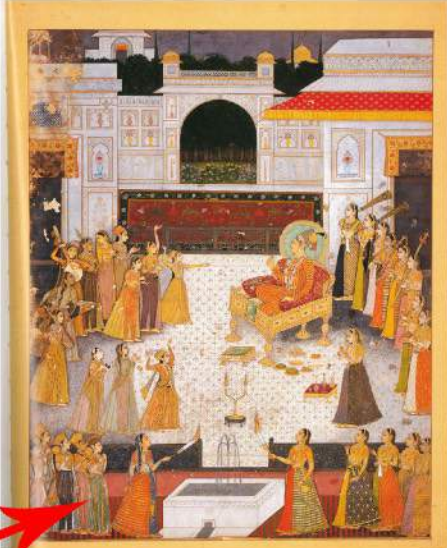
SELECTED GRAPHICS



SELECTED GRAPHICS - INDIAN TAPESTRY



STORMY SKY WITH LIGHTING, WHITE RAIN AND GOLD LIGHT IN THE BACKGROUND



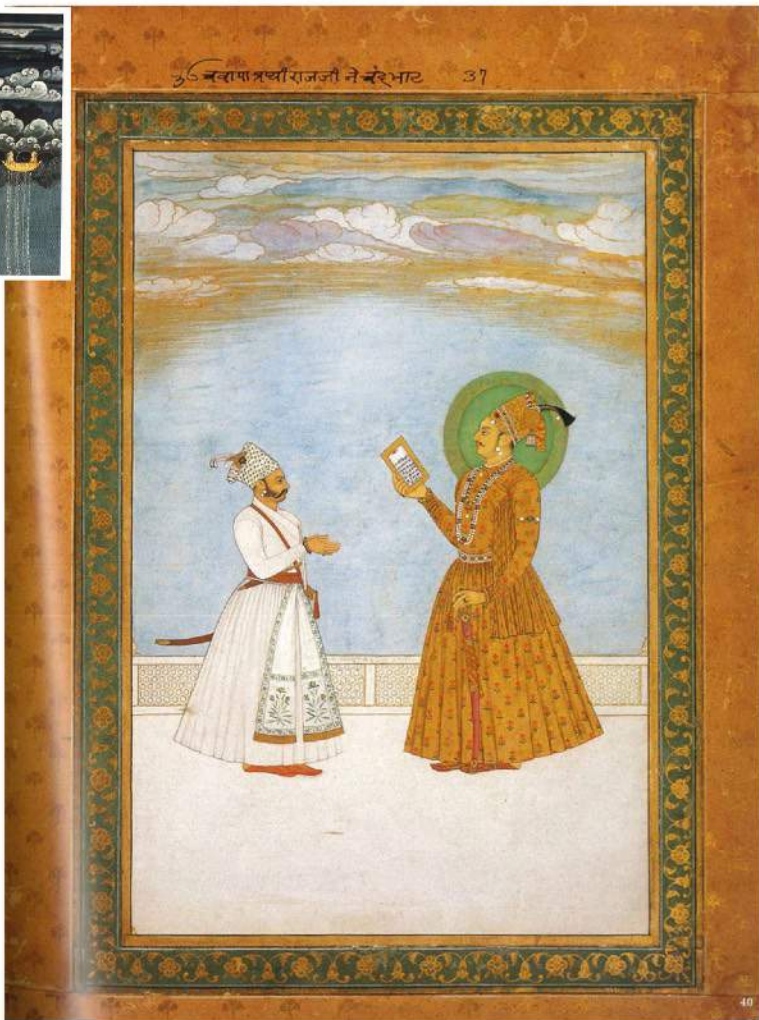
FLOOR REFERENCE & OFFERINGS
GOLD COLOUR REFERENCE



BRITISH ON TAPESTRY REXAMPLE &
CASSIAH'S REFERENCE



MAIN REFERENCE FOR RED BACKGROUND COLOURS & CHARACTERS STANDING OUT IN FOREGROUND



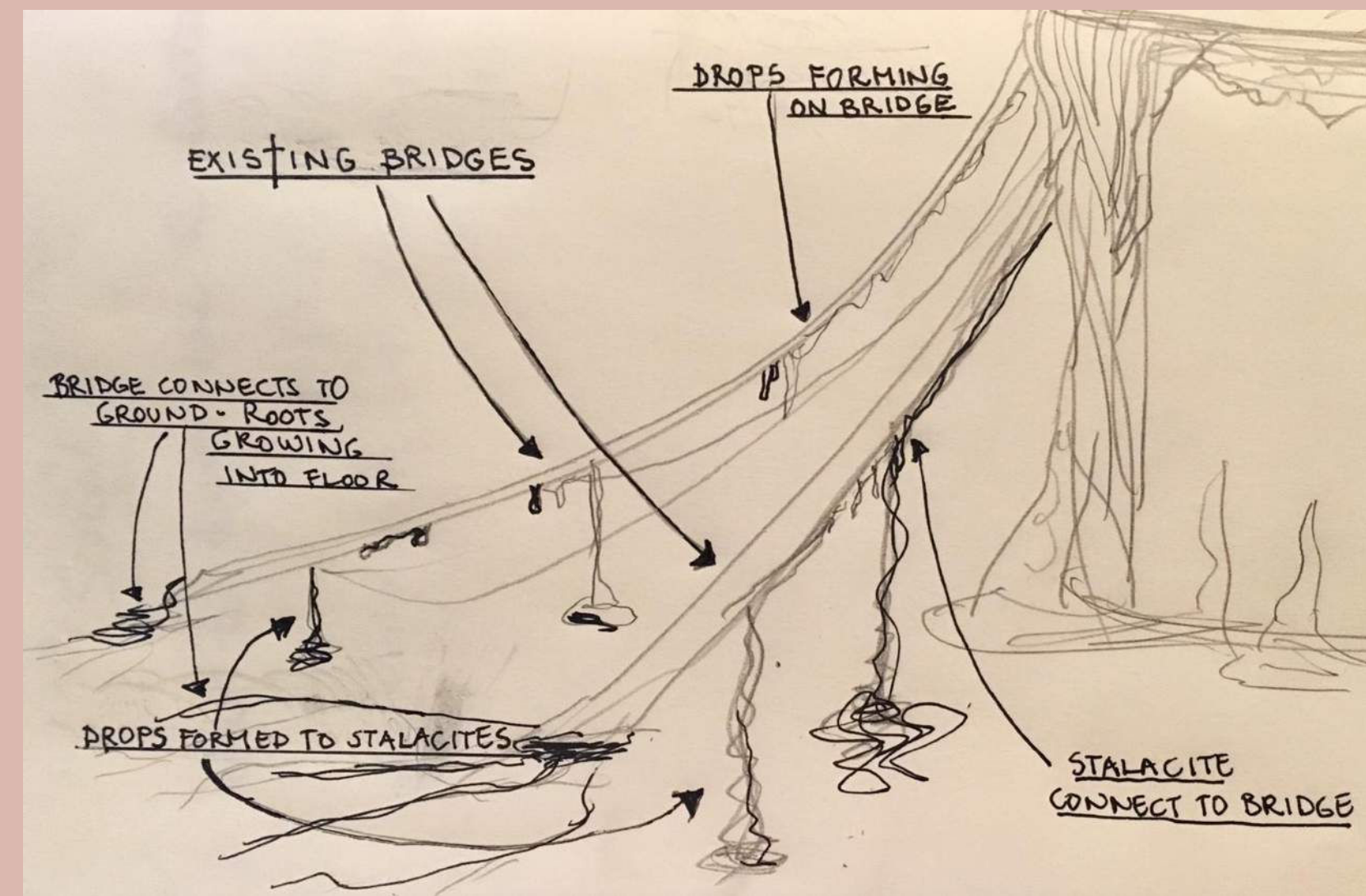
FRAMES REFERENCE - OUTSIDE REF, INSIDE GREEN WITH IVORY
VINE PATTERN



OUTSIDE FRAME PATTERN REFERENCE BUT WITHOUT
FLOWERS



WIP PHOTOS AND THE TEAM



SAM AND KEELEY PROP MODELLERS
WORKING ON THE BATH AT HOME AND ON LOCATION



ME, PAINTING FLATS AND WALLPAPERING
OUTSIDE OUR HOUSE IN HACKNEY WICK



FLORA, ART DIRECTOR
MAKING A FULL SIZE MODEL OF THE BATH
FOR REHEARSAL



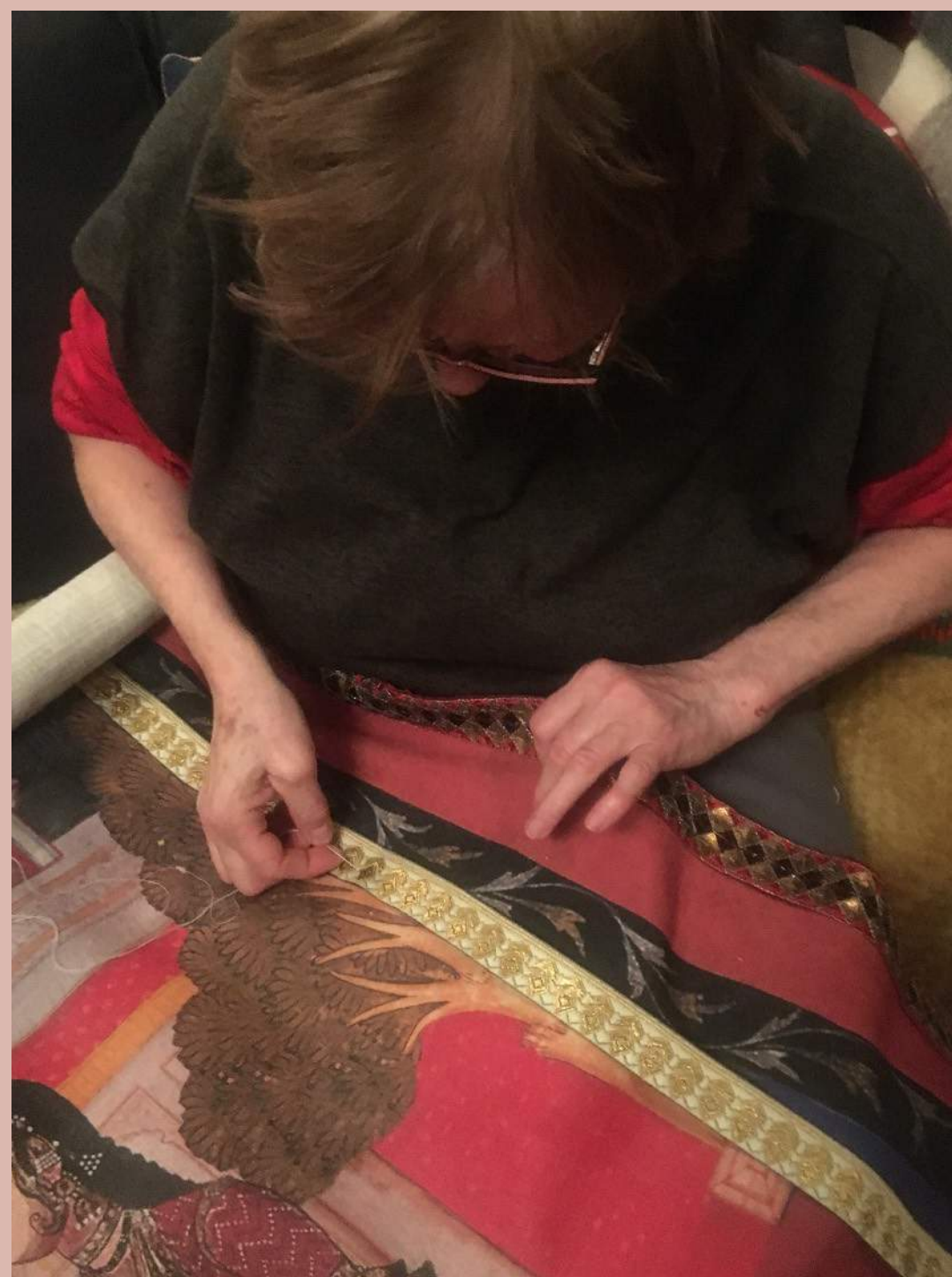
FLORA AND I
LAST DAY OF SHOOTING
FROZEN, EXHAUSTED
AND EXCITED



AARON PROP MASTER
CLEANING THE LOCATION BEFORE DRESSING



VERA, MY MOTHER
WRITING IN HINDI & SEWING THE TAPESTRY
VICTORIAN TEETHING DOLL HANDMADE BY HER



RHONA, ART DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT,
PAINTING ROOTS ON LOCATION



OUR HOUSE & MY CAR RAMMED WITH PROPS IN PREP