



Job Title: Production Designer
Department: Art Department

Overview of Role

The production designer (PD) collaborates with the director and producer as a key creative figure on any production. They create and communicate design ideas and help to realise the director's creative vision. They are responsible for 'the look' of a film or TV production. They are responsible as head of department, for leading the art department team to research, determine and specify how design ideas can be achieved. They also oversee the work of the set decoration, construction and props teams within their role. The production designer, with the supervising art director (SAD), construction manager (CM), set decorator (SD) and props master (PM), creates a working schedule of all design, building and set decoration for all sets and locations work for a production. The PD designs and oversees the construction of set builds with SAD and art directors (AD) in studio and on location, and troubleshoots any creative or technical issues that may arise. They also recruit and manage the art department staff working within the budget and production deadlines.

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 design visualisation

- Identify creative requirements or concepts by creating a script breakdown
- Liaise with producers, directors and director of photography (DOP) to ensure full communication, for example, that plans are in place to match the schedule requirements
- Research style and period relevant to the production using all the resources at their disposal
- Liaise with the location department and brief the types of locations required
- Consider the brief and the feasibility of meeting it against budgetary and scheduling restrictions
- Suggest amendments, additions, or alternatives to enhance the brief considering all the tools of creation at their disposal
- Consider how they will create the design visualisation, recruiting team members to create the visuals if they are unable to do so themselves
- Consider how the use of virtual production, visual or special effects may affect design visualisation
- Confirm with all departments, such as set decoration, construction, props, and VFX, and trades people that they have a shared understanding of the design
- Check and confirm that their interpretation and design visualisation are technically feasible and meet production requirements

- Suggest viable alternatives if requirements change
- Communicate with the supervising art director (SAD), and the set decorator (SD) the decisions that have been made and instigate regular team meetings
- Agree a workflow method with the team that ensures production wide communication.

2. Lead research for production design

- Fully brief the team on their role in the research
- Assess existing material to check its relevance and currency, identifying places for research
- 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 your research
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information in line with organisational procedures

3. Determine production requirements for designs

- Review and record key information and any changes from the production brief which could impact on designs and safety requirements
- Attend site recces to determine design and environment design parameters and limitations
- Identify and agree priorities and resource implications with members of the production
- Evaluate key information and significance relating to scenes, locations and shooting schedules via the script breakdown and ensure this is shared interdepartmentally for collaboration between, for example, standby, props, graphics, set decoration, SFX, action vehicles and animals
- Justify estimates of costs for the proposed design
- Confirm the aspect ratio that the camera is shooting in and consider this in all design work

4. Plan and present design visualisation

- Present the design concept visuals to the production team

- 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 all the relevant people understand the agreed visualisation
- Meet with the relevant teams, such as set decoration, construction, and location, to discuss the practicalities of the agreed visualisation and the type of materials, equipment, and locations required
- Review suggested additions or amendments to the visualisation and present any changes to the relevant people
- Inform production team of the impact and implications of any changes, issues or problems which may affect the production schedule or budget for the visualisation of the design
- Monitor changes to the production schedule and ensure relevant people report any problems or issues to the PD or SAD

5. Develop the art department budget

- Create an accurate budget template
- Determine the line producer's preferred way of working
- Draft the budget based on the script breakdown
- Update production on budgeting progress frequently
- Monitor for changes in the production and the potential impact on budget
- Consider alternative solutions if the cost is prohibitive
- Share the final first pass budget with the relevant people
- Record all agreements and ensure that all parties confirm their acceptance of the agreement

6. Manage the art department budget

- Monitor and manage budgets to ensure that resources are being used according to agreed budget plans
- Attend budget review meetings with the supervising art director (SAD), art department coordinator (ADC), line producer (LP), accounts cost controller, and construction manager (CM) to ensure that all spending is on track and not going over predicted spend
- 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, ensure expenditure details are recorded in an appropriate IT package
- Use information from budget monitoring and control to assist in the preparation of future budgets
- Present actual and final cost predictions prior to final wrap to the cost controller and LP

7. Procure external suppliers to meet production requirements

- Oversee the choice of suppliers and make sure they are competent, affordable and suited to the requirements of the job
- Select the most appropriate suppliers to meet requirements using valid, fair and realistic interpretation of information
- Review the work of contracted suppliers to ensure the work is being carried out in line with production brief requirements and deadlines

8. Manage the art department team

- Select key team members (heads of departments), contracting them via production
- Get production's permission for key members to read the script
- Provide key members access to the schedule for the production
- Develop a work plan which includes the PD and their team
- Confirm everyone in the team understands the scope of their work
- Manage the team's workload and working hours appropriately
- Provide individuals with the opportunity to contribute to their own personal development
- 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 and crossover issues, like clearance
- Provide feedback to the team on the overall production and its progress
- Instigate regular catch-up meetings with all key members of the art department team

9. 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, locations and aspects in the job which may harm them or others.
- Consult with production's H&S advisor(s) to check all potential risks have been covered
- Update your 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 PD immediately if they are asked to do something that might impact safety
- Ensure the art department logs any accidents or near misses and reports them to production
- Consider working hours for the team and ensure nobody is working longer hours than deemed safe

Role Specific Skills:

- Able to conceptualise and design environments that fit to the script and vision of the director and producer
- Skilled at drawing or creating visuals that communicate design ideas
- Manage the art department, and oversight of the construction, set decoration and props teams
- Budget development and management
- Network and liaise with other departments acting as key decision maker for all art department related concerns

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, liaising with production and accounts
- Planning: scheduling and planning practical requirements for equipment and supplies to meet production design needs
- Problem-solving: contingency planning and resolving issues with designs so that productions remain on schedule
- Leadership and management: lead the art department team, upholding ethics and maintaining respect when dealing with others. Supporting and encouraging junior members of the team

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