

Animation Design, Special Project

Summer Project I

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Acknowledgements

There is a new term used in the entertainment industries today, 'Production Designer'. I was really keen to know about this domain as to what production design is and what a production designer really does. That made me take up my summer project under a production designer.

I would really like to thank Prof. Shilpa Ranade to refer me to such a prominent Production designer of our country Mr. Sameer Chanda. I would also like to thank Mr. Sameer Chanda to graciously and patiently bestow me with the wealth of the knowledge on this subject. I have worked with him for the duration of my summer project that is, from 2nd May 2008 to the 2nd June 2008. I have thoroughly enjoyed to work with him and more than that gathered invaluable learnings that will stay with me forever.



Sameer Chanda

Mr Sameer Chanda runs his establishment under the banners of Lisac Creations and Artz Entertainment. Mr Sameer Chanda was trained as an Artist and he came to Bombay with rupees five hundred in his pocket and has slowly worked his way up the ladder. “It is very tough to get a foothold in the industry” he says. His career began as an assistant art director in a Shyam Benegal film. He believes Mr Shyam to be his guru and addresses him as 'Dada', he has since done art direction for over ten Shyam Benegal films. Shyam Benegal himself considers Mr Sameer Chanda to be the best art director in the country. Sameer Chanda has worked on countless other Bollywood productions, television serials and other shows. Sameer Chanda has also recently directed his own home production in Bengali.

Office And Prop Shop

When I started the Internship, I was even more impressed with what the small office accomplished. Besides Mr Sameer Chanda himself, the office had four Assistant Art Directors, and four people in the process of becoming one. The work was divided on the basis of skill sets. The employees were mostly educated in art, architecture and production design. Some did more on-site work the rest did more of drawing and articulation of conceptual models. There was an accounts person, a general management person and a couple of odd jobs people. They also had a prop shop and a workshop where props were made and stored depending on what the films required. The prop shop has everything from antique furniture, paintings, photo frames, lamps and crockery to bullet proof jackets. I also got the opportunity to see an artist do imitation paintings of a pre-prescribed artist.



There are a number of films and television programmes where Mr. Sameer Chanda has worked as a Art Director like Yatra, Omkara (2006), Krrish (2006), Rang De Basanti (2006), Kyun...! Ho Gaya Na (2004), Makdee (2002), Shararat (2002), Om Jai Jagadish (2002), Aks (2001), Zubeidaa (2001), Tera Jadoo Chal Gayaa (2000), Jungle (2000), Dil Se.. (1998), China Gate (1998), "Kabhie Kabhie" (1997) TV series, "Badalte Rishte" (1996) TV series, Is Raat Ki Subah Nahin (1996), Sardari Begum (1996), Shastra (1996), "A Mouthful of Sky" (1995) TV series, Nirnnayam (1995), "Swabhimaan" (1995) TV series, Rudaali (1993), Yodha (1992), Saudagar (1991), Ram Lakhan (1989), Mandi (1983) [assistant to art director]. He has recently started working as a Production designer; the films are listed below:

Production Designer	
2008	‘U, Me Aur Hum’
2007	‘Blood Brothers’, Guru (hindi, telgu, english version)
2006	‘Koi... Mil Gaya 2: Krrish’ (hindi, english versions), ‘Rang De Basanti’ (hindi, english versions)
2005	‘Divorce: Not Between Husband and Wife’, ‘The Blue Umbrella’ (hindi, english versions), ‘Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero’, ‘Kisna: The Warrior Poet’
2004	‘Rok Sako To Rok Lo’
2002	‘Shararat’
1998	‘Bombay Blue’ (TV mini-series)



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Understanding Production Design

Production design is the visual art and craft of cinematic storytelling.

If you see, a film is ultimately a visual medium, its visual material is almost like another actor, itself creating a mood and eliciting an emotional reaction from the audience.

As settings are not merely backdrops for the action, but symbolic extensions of the theme & characterizations and real isn't always best for the film there is a need for a designer who will design a world with its own inner logic and truth by selecting the settings and style to visually tell the story. That is when the Production designer comes into the picture.

It is the Production Designer's responsibility to find the right visual and spatial elements that best convey the film's theme and emotion.

Hence, the Production Designer is involved with a film almost from day one, that is as soon as the final script is set and the film goes into pre-production. They work in close collaboration with the director and director of photography to create the film's look and feel by choosing the right colors, shapes, and compositions for each shot. The three are really building a skeleton and framework and cohesive vision for a film.



Things taken into consideration while finding the look of the film

- The looks of a film comes out of the content
- The director's conception of the story is also taken into consideration
- The work should act as a metaphor, by creating a specific psychological, atmospheric and emotional image of what you want to visually project
- Create an environment for the narrative that will help reflect the characters



Responsibilities of a Production designer

1] Set Design

- The obvious responsibility of a production designer is to design the set which must be a balance between their own creative vision and the film's need for authenticity of time and place, that means a lot of research that can mean doing a lot of reading, interviews, internet search.
- There is a 'Set Designer' who drafts blueprints based on concepts, descriptions or drawings and then supervises the construction of sets.

2] Location

- Simultaneously the search for the places as visualized according to the script begins.
- The 'Location Scout/Manager' takes still photos and shoots video to aid in the search process.
- If the perfect location isn't found they need to come up with ways to work within the given parameters of space, time, and budgetary limitations.

3] Set Decor

- Begins after the set has been built or after a real location has been selected.
- A list is made of what decor elements are necessary for each location in the script.
- They include the minutest details of the set paint, wallpaper, floor coverings, window treatments, furniture, paintings, photographs, books, magazines, newspaper, appliances and audio-visual equipment.



4] Character design

- According to the script a character sketch of the behavior is done for all the characters of the film, which will help decide not only the appearance but also the props each character will own.
- Every visual element should complement, support and develop the cinematic narrative and fit into the overall design plan. This is when the 'Costume Designer and Make-up & Hair Artist' get involved in the project.

>Costume Designer

- Researches, creates or selects the clothing to be worn by the actors.
- Color and texture concept will be established and agreed with the Production Designer and Director.

>Hair and Makeup

- The hair crew researches, creates and administers makeup and hair to cater the look and personality of the character and help establish storyline, period, mood and atmosphere keeping in mind the director's point of view.

5] Props

- Items handled by the Actors are designated as props.
- They are gathered, designed or purchased by the 'Property Master' to give the film distinction. He is also responsible for their placement and care during the shooting phase of a film.



6] Production Illustrations

-Artists are hired to paint or draw a conception of the Production Designers ideas for a set known as 'Production Illustrators'.

7] Drafts

-The 'Draftsman' makes technical drawings that detail a plan to build a set.

-Like drafting for architecture.

8] Construction

-The 'Construction Coordinator' is responsible for the building of sets, he follows the drafting of the art department and supervises the construction crew.

-The set is built around the idea that cameras will be shot around it so therefore wild walls can be moved around for a specific shot.

-He has a 'Construction Crew' made up of many artisans, carpenters and painters who build all the props and architectural elements and sets that are not naturally found. There are also 'Scenic Artist' (Art department specialist) who create all painted backgrounds, prop paintings, signage, any illustrative material, magazine covers, book jackets and murals indicated by the story.



9] Set Dressing

-A 'Set Dresser' works under the supervision of the set decorator and is responsible for laying the decor on set.

10] Special Effects

-Finally comes the post production requirements. Digital technology has made a tremendous impact on production designing.

-CGI is employed for budgetary and logistical reasons. Helps to create impossible shots and to augment, change and enhance according to the mood board and colour palette decided by Production designer.

11] Art Direction

-There is a 'Art Director' to runs the show during production.

-Responsible for dealing with vendors and the logistics of getting materials to and from the set.



The Production Designer's visualization team

The Art Department

-Nucleus of the Art Department staff consists of the art director, set designer, set decorator and property master costume designer, the key hair and make-up stylists, the special effects director followed by a support staff.

-Support staff includes the buyer, construction coordinator, construction crew, production illustrator, scenic artist, set dresser, greensman, draftsman, location manager, painters, carpenter and location scout.



Project

The film I was working on is called 'Zokkomon'. It is the first Indian Live action film to be produced by Walt Disney in India. The script of the film has been written by Satyajit Bhatkal who had previously written the script for 'Lagaan'. The film is to be directed by Shamli Dey. Mr Sameer Chanda is to be the art director of the film.

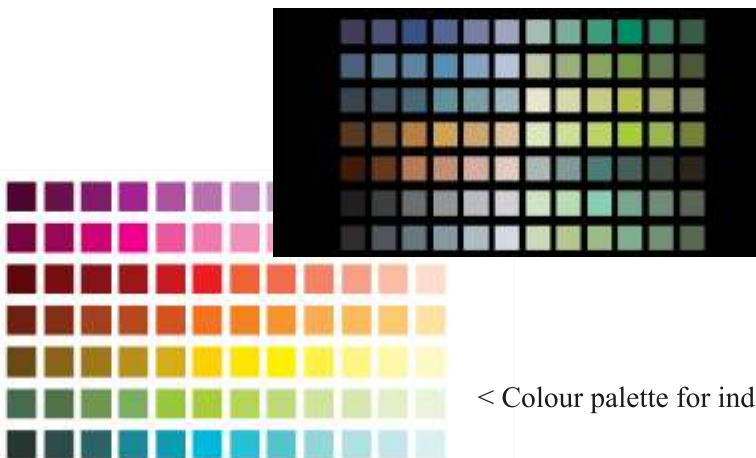
I started with reading the script of the film. It took a few days to internalize the script. Then we broke down the script as prescribed into slots which helped us segregate and zoom in. We made a list of the different sets and the props required in them. We conjured up the history behind the scenes and contextualized and justified the scenario. We gave lifestyles and visual references to the characters. First we articulated by writing down the moods, the colors and visual vocabulary.

After developing an approach and a design philosophy for the spaces, we thought about the film as a purely visual and spatial story with due regard to the real story. I discovered that production design is an amazingly large chunk of a film. Then we scanned and searched all sources in books and on the internet to find a visual match to our ideas. The textures on the wall, the floors, the architecture and the furniture were all shown visually, so as to draw a picture of our conceptualization. We drew maps to orient our self to the village setting. We drew plan and elevation drawings of the houses and other buildings in the film. We drew in perspective to visualize the spaces in scale and volume. We made color pallets to and discovered various lighting styles.

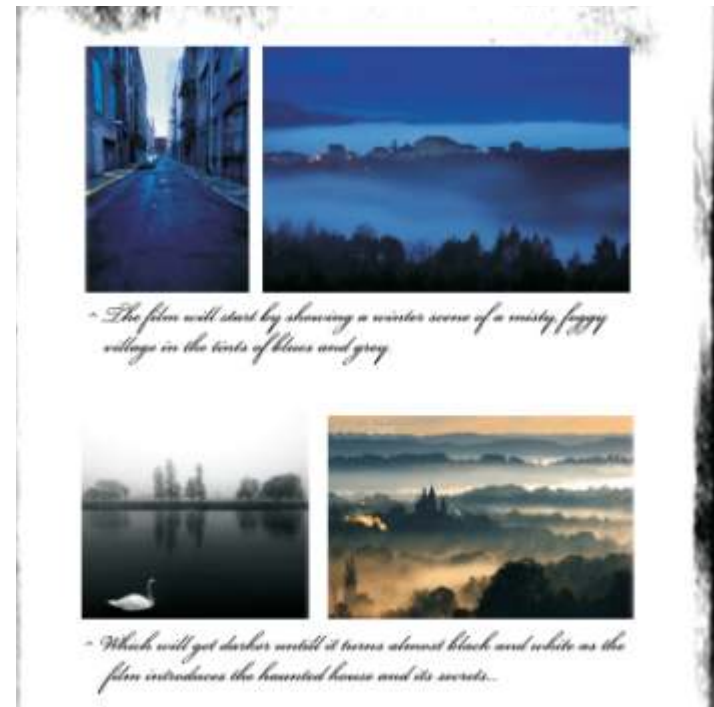
Once we had all our research in place we took each set as a section and tackled them individually. It was compiled into a presentation to present to the client as a design philosophy, mood board and color pallets to be followed through the film. It is actually more like selling the concept to the client but also, a reference booklet to be followed as a guide for drawings, models and eventually on the set.

17.	EXT	DAY	Kunal, Arju and Ranj walking back from school	Village Road	
18.	EXT	DAY	Telling about the haunted house and daring him to go into it.	Road near Haunted House.	Mango tree and one storied dilapidated building which is the haunted house
19.	EXT	DAY	Kunal enters the house and comes out to bump into Mad Magic	Haunted House	Giant door of the Haunted house. Bats flying out and black cat.
20.	INT	DAY	Deshraj is sitting with his side kick in the car	Deshraj Sharma's car	Packet full of Garlands, car
21.	INT	DAY	Deshraj talking to government officials and on the phone to his side kick who is pretending to be amitabh bacchan	Deshraj Sharma's office	Telephone, garlands, Four seated govt officials
22.	INT	DAY	Sidekick imitating Bacchan	Deshraj Sharma's car	Car, phone
23.	INT	DAY	More conversation on phone	School, Deshraj's office	Telephone, garlands, Four seated govt officials
24.	INT	DAY	Sidekick imitating Bacchan	Deshraj Sharma's car	Deshraj Sharma's car
25.	INT	DAY	Deshraj meets the official	School, Deshraj's office	
26.	INT	NIGHT	Mrs Sharma handing milk to both the boys with evident discrimination	Deshraj's house, Babloo's room	Bed, glass of milk On kunal's pillow is a photograph of him with his mother and father
27.	INT	NIGHT	Deshraj tells the problem to his wife	Deshraj's house, Deshraj's bedroom	Uneaten plate of food with kheer on the side table
28.	INT	NIGHT	Sidekick pretending to be	Deshraj's House, Living Room	Handcuffs, wig

^ Brake down of script



< Colour palette for individual sets



< Mood board



^ References to match conceptualization



My design solution for the book

This film has a well scripted, intriguing story about the little mysteries of everyday life in India. It's a story about a child who's life changes as it is plunged into the darker shades of life. Hence the cover is made in jet black to convey the dark, secretive, mystery, every-thing-hidden themes that dominate the story. This cover unfolds to reveal individual 'Set design' booklet, this is done with the purpose to reflect the storyline, which unfolds beautifully step by step to give invaluable lessons to the children. There are 'puzzle' dyecut on each docket to represent the life of a child that is full of questions which he lives with interest as if its a game, joining each piece to form an amazing experience to remember for a life time. The description of each set and the research pages are designed as slide outs because of the fact that everything should be intriguing and hidden just like the story and also to add fun to the book as this film is predominantly being made for the children also that's the reason to use children drawings for the cover page for each booklet. The fallowing pages show the book docket and the individual booklets that I have designed.



^ Envelope with docket
to hold each set design



^ The way it will look when being opened



^ The way it will look when being opened >



^ Cover when the slide out is intact



^ The text revealed after sliding out



^ Pages containing scanned and searched visual matches to my ideas



< All the booklets containing the design philosophy for the spaces, moods, the colors and visual vocabulary that will run in the entire film



What I have learnt from this experience about Production Design

- Production design is telling a story visually
- Environments should have a metaphysical impact on how the audience perceives the story and the characters
- 'How do you want the viewer to feel?' can be created
- The atmospheric qualities of the sets, location and environments are essential in establishing a mood and projecting an emotional feeling about the world surrounding the film
- Take an idea and translates it visually to communicate or comment upon the themes of the story
- Create a visual metaphor which acts on the subconscious level, presenting subtle layers of poetic imagery that can impart ideas, concepts and significance in the narrative