

Overview of Role

The Set Decorator reports to Production Designer and collaboratively realises the vision for the look and visual style of a production, by sourcing suitable props and set dressings. They must break down the script for set dressing and props requirements and undertake research on locations, period and characters in advance of filming. They must decide on the style of props such as furniture, fabrics, wallpaper, and communicate this to the Production Buyer (PB), and sub-specialists such as greens, drapes, graphics, etc. They manage and oversee the set decorating department, ensuring they remain within tight schedules and budgets.

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 carry out research

- Read the script and interpret the creative direction and vision
- Familiarise yourself with the PD's reference material
- Liaise with the PD to review the brief and clarify the design requirements and creative direction
- Confirm that you have a shared understanding of the design using visual representation as necessary
- Establish lines of communication across departments to track progress against production schedules
- Confirm the scope, depth, timing, specific objectives and format for the research
- Collate information regarding the period, genre, and type of production in relation to the design requirements
- Conduct research and gather relevant information and references, briefing those assisting you with the research
- Check that the information you wish to use is available and that you are legally allowed to use it
- Present research material in the required format to the Production Designer and Director
- Record all sources of information to store with the research
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information in line with organisational procedures

2. Determine production design requirements

- Identify and agree priorities, scheduling and resource implications that impact the Set Dec team, with the PD, Director and members of Production, Accounting, line producer etc
- Prepare own script break down
- Confirm with the PD which visual elements and resources are required
- Collaborate with the PD, Production, DoP, Locations Manager (LM), Supervising Art Director (SAD), Construction Manager (CM), and Prop Master (PM), to formulate a set/dress and strike schedule giving the scope and timescale of work to be carried out
- Record key information from production meetings which could impact the Set Dec department
- Hold meetings with the Set Dec Team to confirm roles, responsibilities and timelines, and schedule regular update meetings, communicating changes as they come up
- Attend location reces to check how requirements may impact the set design and materials used

3. Develop and present design concepts

- Develop a design philosophy and specification which meets the production requirements.
- Consider the requirements from the script breakdown and decide what needs to be hired, and what will need to be manufactured or purchased
- Present a Show and Tell for the PD and Director to gain feedback on your design direction
- Consider the environmental impact and sustainability of design options
- Assess changes to the design brief and suggest alternatives when it is not possible to produce one solution that meets all requirements
- Develop alternative solutions when a different approach is suggested
- Confirm changes requested by decision makers and incorporate them into requirements.

4. Develop and manage set decoration budgets

- Confirm the Set Decoration budget allocations with Accounting / Production
- Use Script Breakdown and Set strike schedule to allocate funds, and create realistic and cost-effective budgets in conjunction with the Production Buyer depending on scale of production

- Justify estimates of costs for the proposed design and suggest alternatives if the cost needs reducing
- Record allowance for contingencies to address potential problems that could affect budget
- Share the final Proposed Budget with Producer, Line Producer, Cost Controller and Production Designer for sign off
- Schedule regular budget updates with the Production Buyer who will be negotiating and monitoring spend / updating budget lines on behalf of the department
- Review cost implications of other department requests or change to schedule or script.
- Suggest revisions where needed and gain written agreement from Line Producer for any additional spend or budget alteration, keeping notes on where cost lines have changed.
- Provide regular updates to the PD and Line Producer on budget progress in conjunction with Production Buyer
- Prepare the final budget report at the wrap of the project

5. Create Drawings to meet Production Requirements

- Access Art Department Drawings that need Set Dec input
- Oversee the preparation of drawings, or manufacturing plans specifically for the Set Dec department as required
- Ensure clear communication with the Production Designer and gain approval of drawings/plans
- Oversee the completion, filing and distribution of each plan as required

6. Procure external services and source materials and suppliers

- Maintain production confidentiality protocols confirm all suppliers have signed non-disclosure agreements (NDA's)
- Ensure clear communication regarding who will be responsible for specific elements e.g. Real FX, Action Props, Graphics, Animals, Greens etc
- Provide visual representations to others to clarify the scale and type of materials
- Brief Production Buyer on all requirements
- Consider lead times and production schedule when considering bespoke builds or off the shelf items
- Liaise with DoP on practical lighting
- Decide whether to purchase or hire props and consider any required ongoing use

- Oversee or carry out the research for companies and suppliers for specific materials/tasks
- Ensure that potential suppliers are adequately briefed about requirements and constraints including access to locations and any specific rules or regulations
- Give final approval on all suppliers, deliverables, adjustments, and terms (negotiations to be carried out by Production Buyer)
- Approve any supplier cost changes or final invoices (all negotiations carried out by Production Buyer)
- Source props from suitable suppliers e.g. prop houses, auction houses, product placement
- Ensure clearance is gained by the Production team before items are used on set
- Ensure the team are up to date with all orders and deliveries and that they have been allocated to the correct sets
- Establish a recording system to log, check, file and track items per set

6. Oversee design manufacturing

- Decide which elements will need to be manufactured as required
- Recruit Heads of Department (HoDs) to deal with the manufacturing of set dressing items – this could include Prop Modellers, Carpenters, Painters, Drapes, Greens, etc.
- Brief Set Decoration Art Directors, Draughts people, or specialist suppliers on the requirements
- Consult with experts and ensure the relevant technical information is clearly expressed in the drawings and other material
- Check that the drawings / designs fulfil your brief at all stages of the design process
- Present plans to PD and gain approval before commencing manufacture

7. Oversee graphics

- Explain the design specifications and show supporting information such as the nature, style, content, and creative intention of the graphic elements to the Graphic Designer / Graphic Art Director
- 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.
- Confirm that production team clears artwork for use

8. Dress sets

- Liaise with other departments to ensure the scheduling and specific location requests have been considered.
- Prepare clear plans and instructions of how the set or location is to be dressed
- Identify any specialist equipment that may be needed for dressing the set
- Carry out set dressing
- Oversee the props team and placement of all props
- Update the Production Designer as the work is being carried out, sharing photographs to ensure their vision is being adhered to at all times
- Hand over completed sets with clear instructions to the standby set dec and props teams

9. Manage the work of teams

- Identify crew requirements based on the scale of the production
- Interview and select proposed crew that meet Set Dec Dept and production requirements
- Hire crew liaising with the production team for contracting to be completed
- Develop a work plan which includes yourself and your team
- Brief your team and give full access to buying lists, mood boards concepts and scripts to ensure everyone has a firm understanding of the production style
- Check that all members of the team understand the requirements and specific activities they are responsible for
- Monitor crew and suppliers' performance to ensure that contract terms are being fulfilled
- Provide individuals with the opportunity to contribute to their own personal development
- Devise a work plan with junior colleagues that will enable them to carry out the desired work
- Provide advice and guidance as appropriate to enable work to be completed
- Ensure your team is clear on the procedure for dealing with problems and to whom problems should be reported
- Provide feedback to your team on the overall production and its progress and seek their feedback on ways to improve future projects
- Confirm that risk assessments for the work of your team have been undertaken and your team complies with health and safety legislation and procedures
- Work collaboratively with Production Team to create a good working environment between Set Decorating dept and Production for your team and their wellbeing

10. Comply with Health & Safety requirements

- Keep up to date with health and safety policies and procedures for the production
- Identify production working practices and aspects which may harm you or others
- Consult with production's H&S advisor(s) to confirm you've covered all potential risks.
- Check with the Location Risk Assessor for anything which might be a risk or hazard to your team working onsite
- Confirm that risk assessments for the work of your team have been undertaken and your team complies with health and safety legislation and procedures
- Update and maintain H & S information relating to your team
- Ask your representatives on set (standby team) to contact you immediately if they are asked to do something that might impact safety
- Ensure you know who the relevant person to report accidents or near misses to and to is, and how they would need to receive the report (i.e. in person, via email etc)
- Consider working hours for your team and ensure nobody is working longer hours than deemed safe

Role Specific Skills:

- Script breakdown and interpreting the creative vision of the PD
- Creation of mood boards and drawings for approval by the PD and Director
- Selecting and managing of the Set Decoration team
- Budget development and supervision
- Networking and liaising with other departments such as Locations, Accounts, Production, etc
- Oversee work of all departments falling under the Set Dec team, including Greens, Props, Animals, Home Economics, Graphics, Drapes, etc.
- Utilising knowledge of prop houses, auction houses, manufacturers, etc
- Set Dressing

Other / Transferable Skills:

- Communication: interpreting other's requirements and communicating requirements to other departments and colleagues
- Team-working: collaboration within own and with other departments, liaising with suppliers and Production team

- Leadership and Management: Lead the Set Decoration team, uphold ethics and maintain respect when dealing with others. Support and encourage junior members of the team
- Planning: scheduling and planning practical requirements for materials and supplies to meet Set Decoration needs
- Problem-solving: contingency planning and resolving issues with suggested props so that productions remain on schedule

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. Refresh and add to your technical skills and knowledge