



FILM PRODUCTION

DEPARTMENT GUIDE

ART DEPARTMENT

The Art Department, under the direction of the Art Director, works to deliver the vision of the Production Designer. The department is responsible for all aspects of the design of the production, including set design, set dressing, props, graphic design and modelmaking.

Some skills required in the Art Department include drafting, modelmaking, graphic design, concept art, and set decoration. A knowledge of period architecture and furnishing, ability to read technical drawings, familiarity with 3D design packages and architectural expertise are all advantageous in the art department, as well as organisational skills, and visual flair, and excellent knowledge of specialist and general suppliers: the art department also requires buyers who source, negotiate and purchase props and set elements.

ASSISTANT DIRECTING

The Assistant Directors (AD) department is the department responsible for supporting the director and crew throughout the shoot. The department, under the director, consists of First AD, Second AD, Third AD and Trainee AD's.

The First AD is the director's right hand, and responsible for all the practicalities of the shoot, including scheduling, planning and prepping of the day to day running of the shoot ensuring all departments work together to complete the days work in a safe and timely fashion and making sure the schedule is shot as planned. The Second AD supports the First AD, and is responsible for ensuring cast are prepped for each scene by liaising with Hair, Make-Up and Costume, and getting them to set on time; communicating with the crew daily in order to prep the following day's work; and creating and issuing call sheets. The 2nd AD is the backbone of the department. The Third AD also supports the First AD in communicating requirements on set and organising extras and background elements on the shoot; directing the Trainee AD's; helping the First keep control of the set; and controlling "lock off".

The Trainee AD job cover a multitude, but under the guidance of the 1st, 2nd & 3rd AD you should be a highly organised multi-tasker, a great communicator, and be diplomatic, tactful and perceptive. Good ADs are highly adaptable and think on their feet, and also tend to have a positive attitude, with great stamina and energy.

CAMERA/ LIGHTING

The Camera and Lighting Department encompasses the collaborative departments of Camera, Lighting/Electrical and Grip. The department is broadly responsible for the capturing of the shot, in collaboration with the director. This can be a hugely diverse and labour intensive task, depending on the creative and technical requirements of any given shot, and there is generally a large amount of equipment and rigs to set up, operate and maintain. The Director of Photography, or Cinematographer, is the creative lead of the department, supported by a Camera Operator, 1st Assistant Camera Operator (also known as a Focus Puller), 2nd Assistant Camera Operator (also known as a Clapper Loader), and Trainee. The camera department also includes a Digital Imaging Technician, who is responsible for ensuring that the digital data recorded by the cameras is managed, filed and packaged correctly for post-production.

To work in the camera department, you should have some kind of camera, photography or film background or aptitude, be highly creative, have an eye for detail, and possess a strong understanding of technology, visual composition, perspective and movement. The roles are quite physical with a lot of heavy lifting, so strength and stamina are important. You should be extremely collaborative, diplomatic and ideas-driven, with meticulous attention to detail, and a high level of diligence and care when dealing with expensive equipment.

CONSTRUCTION/ SET CRAFT

The construction department interprets, plans, manages and builds all sets and constructed elements of a film. Working closely with the art department, construction departments include trades such as painters, carpenters, riggers, plasterers, as well as specialist film construction-related roles such as stagehands. This area includes highly skilled master craftsperson roles such as Scenic Painter.

Set craft personnel on film are required to have the relevant construction-related skills and qualifications (apprenticeship/ CSCS/Safepass, etc.), but also require specialist knowledge of how these skills are customised in a film environment. Those with a construction background would require specialist training and on-the-job experience in order to convert their existing skills to a film environment, as well as building their knowledge and skills in relation to period detailing and techniques.

You should have a thorough knowledge of the specific requirements of temporary constructions for film, be completely versed in health & safety issues, be an excellent team player, have strong numerical skills, and be adaptable and good at thinking on your feet.

CONTINUITY

Continuity, or Script Supervision, involves closely monitoring what is being filmed each day to ensure that the finished product ends up making continuous verbal and visual sense. Falling under the directing department, the script supervisor works closely with director and all other departments in terms of monitoring and recording action, props and camera details.

You should be meticulously organised with good IT skills, have a strong eye for detail, as well as having an understanding of visual composition, perspective and movement. You should also possess the stamina to remain highly focused throughout the day.

COSTUME/ WARDROBE

The Costume Department is responsible for the design, fitting, hire, purchase, manufacture, continuity and care of all costume items on film/TV. The department collaborates closely with a wide range of other departments for which costume may have an impact, including Camera and Sound.

You should have a knowledge of period costume and contemporary fashion for all ages and genders, be excellent with people, and be highly attentive to detail. You should have an awareness of continuity, be able to work well under pressure, and be computer literate. Sewing and pattern cutting skills are a distinct advantage.

GRIP DEPARTMENT

The grip department works with camera and lighting/electrical departments to ensure that camera shots are achievable by building, maintaining, and ensuring the safety of all equipment that enables the camera to capture the shot (e.g. dollies, cranes, tripods, etc.) The grip crew consists of the Key Grip, Best Boy (Grip), Dolly Grip, Grip and Trainee.

Working in the department requires excellent mechanical know-how, and knowledge of film-related equipment. You should have great stamina, and enjoy finding creative solutions to problems, as well as being a strong team player.

HAIR/MAKE-UP

The two departments of Make-Up and Hair are responsible for the design and application of hair and make-up, including hair cutting and styling and corrective make-up, as well as specialist techniques such as wig application, facial hair application, prosthetics application, body paint, and ageing effects. The departments collaborate closely with each other, as well as with other departments such as SFX, Camera and ADs.

You should have some experience in hairdressing or as a make-up artist, and be efficient and organised. You should be highly creative with excellent people skills, and have some knowledge of both period and contemporary looks for different ages and genders. It's also important to stay up to date with new processes, tools, and materials.

LIGHTING/ ELECTRICAL

The lighting crew is involved in the design, set-up and control of lighting plan in collaboration with the Cinematographer. The electrical department works closely with the lighting crew in the set up and operation of lighting and electrical equipment, and supports the camera department on all elements of electrical distribution. The departments consists of a Gaffer (or Chief Lighting Technician), Best Boy, Lighting Technician, Generator Operator, Electrician, Practical Electrician and Dimmer Operator.

In order to work in the electrical department, you must be a qualified electrician with an interest in the film industry, and be able to translate your general electrical expertise to the requirements of film and camera/lighting set-ups. Lighting requires an excellent eye, creative problem-solving, great team working skills, and deep technical knowledge and expertise.

LOCATIONS

The Locations Department is responsible for sourcing and securing all non-studio locations for a film/TV production, a process that begins at early pre-production stage. Location Managers collaborate closely with the director and production designer. The Department consists of a Location Manager, Assistant Location Manager and Trainee. The Location Manager identifies and photographs location options; negotiates and is responsible for issues such as permitting, insurance and certain copyright issues; and manages all logistical issues in relation to the shooting location. This includes ensuring that the location is safe, accessible, and suitable for shooting requirements, including considerations such as noise and light.

You should be a quick and creative thinker, excellent communicator, great at dealing with the public, very organised, and have some understanding and appreciation of the natural and built environment. Location Managers are responsible for Health & Safety on set, so awareness of these issues is important. It also helps to have good photography skills, a keen eye for the unusual, and an ability to spot potential and think laterally. A full clean driver's license and own car is essential.

PROP DEPARTMENT

The term 'props' refers to any moveable item that is meant to be visible on film. This huge range of objects includes Dressing Props, Hand Props, Hero Props (objects central to the action in a scene), Stunt Props (replica items made of soft materials), and Mechanical Props. Props also include weapons and foliage.

The Property Department works within the Art Department, and is responsible for the manufacture, maintenance, transportation and storage of props, as well as prepping props for each day's shoot and dressing props into sets. They work with the art department and the construction department to build props, and also work with actors and extras in relation to how they interact with and use props.

You should be well organised, well versed in health and safety procedures, and be able to work under pressure in a physical role. You should also have a good understanding of materials, have good DIY and craft skills, and good research skills.

PRODUCTION

The Production Office on a film includes the Production Coordinator, the Production Manager, and the Line Producer, as well as assistants, runners and trainees. Coordinators begin at pre-production stage, and are responsible for much of the logistics and paperwork required for the production, including work permits, travel arrangements, and accommodation. During production, they are responsible for distribution of crew lists, progress reports and script changes, liaising with transport department, and production administration and logistics. Runners and assistants will work with the coordinator on the administrative requirements of the production.

The Production Manager manages the production budget (in collaboration with production accountant), and deals with all issues relating to the hiring of crew; ensuring that the production runs safely, efficiently and within budget; as well as dealing with all personnel issues. The Line Producer oversees the production, including the work of the Production Manager, and must breakdown the script for the purpose of budgeting, in order for the producer to raise the appropriate finance for the project.

Line producers and production managers should have excellent business instincts, have a full understanding of how the film industry works, and also be highly organised, work well under pressure, and have excellent leadership skills. Production coordinators (as well as assistants and runners) should be extremely efficient and organised, have good administrative and IT skills, work well with others, and also be self-motivated multi-taskers.

PRODUCTION ACCOUNTS

The accounts department manages all financial issues in relation to the production, and ensures that invoices are paid, purchasing processes are followed, accounting information is monitored and recorded, and expenditure is managed in line with the production budget. The department is also responsible for cash flow management, cost reporting to financiers, and payroll. The department consists of a production accountant, assistant production accountant, and a trainee.

Production accountants usually have accountancy backgrounds or significant experience in a production accounts environment. Entry level positions in the department require a high degree of organisation and discretion, a good head for numbers, and some knowledge of spreadsheets. You will need to learn basic bookkeeping practices, as well as coming to grips with various tax and payroll issues.

SOUND

The Production Sound department is responsible for the capturing of sound on set, and is responsible for sound recording, the management of noise on location, the placement of microphones (both on actors and on set), and managing equipment, budget, and interactions with other departments. The department consists of Sound Mixer, Boom Operators, and trainee.

You don't require any formal qualifications to work in sound, but the roles do require specialist training in the area. You should have excellent listening skills and attention to detail, have an interest in and aptitude for electronics, be able to collaborate effectively with other departments, and be a good problem solver.

SPECIAL EFFECTS (SFX)

The Special Effects (SFX) department is responsible for all practical effects required on a shoot, that is, any effects that are created physically, as opposed to effects that are added in post-production. Special effects on-set might include such elements as squibs (devices that create gunshot and bloodspray effects); hydraulic or explosive elements; or customised sets and props made out of specialist material, to give the impression of destruction. The SFX department works closely with make-up in terms of developing prosthetics and special effects make-up, and the art department in terms of customising sets and props.

SFX supervisors and personnel should be well-versed in health & safety, as well as having strong mechanical and electrical knowledge, as well as a good knowledge of different materials and how they may react in certain circumstance.

STUNTS

The stunts department is responsible for any stunts, including action, fighting or driving stunts. They devise, set-up and perform complex action set pieces in collaboration with the director, and often collaborate closely with the Special Effects team. The department includes the stunt coordinator, stunt performer, and stunt riggers. Stunt performers often progress to stunt coordinator.

There are a number of categories within stunts that require various qualifications, including fighting/martial arts, horses and driving, falling, water, agility and strength, or other specialist skills. Stunt coordinators should be well versed in Health and Safety, have an awareness of the physics of motion, and be highly collaborative, with strong visual and choreography skills. Stunt performers should be physically fit, know how to work collaboratively, and have strong communication and acting skills.

VISUAL EFFECTS (VFX)

The Visual Effects (VFX) department, as it operates on-set, works closely with the director, and other relevant departments to ensure that complex scenes that require CG (computer generated) elements in post-production are shot in such a way as to optimise cost effectiveness and efficiency during the digital post-production process, as well as ensuring that digital effects are photo-real and seamless once combined with live action elements.

The VFX team on set usually includes the VFX Supervisor and VFX coordinator. The former collaborates closely with the director, cinematographer and production designer, and ensures that the director's vision is communicated effectively to the VFX team in post-production. The VFX coordinator gathers and records precise data and detail on set, to ensure that the digital production process (including elements such as lighting and camera angles) can be matched precisely to the footage that is shot on set.

VFX Supervisors generally have a background in 2D or 3D digital effects, with deep technical knowledge of directing, cinematography and post production, an excellent eye, and good problem-solving and people management skills. VFX coordinators should be thorough, diligent and organised, as well as having some knowledge of photography and IT. VFX coordinators should be able to work quickly and very unobtrusively to gather data without holding up the shoot.