

Costume Design in Film and Television Work

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Abstract

Costume design owns more and more important aspects of film and television work. This article is a state of arts review article which aims to present detail practical information needed for costume design in film and television storytelling, including Elements of costume design (Color theory and palette selection, Textiles and materials selection, Silhouette and form, and Accessories and props), collaboration in film and TV costume production, conceptualization of film and TV costume design (methods for developing costume designs and creation of mood boards and color palettes), costume production (application of costume designs in real production and budgeting and time management), conduct research for costume design, and famous talented film and TV costume designers typical work.

Keywords: costume design, film and television work

Overview

1. Background

Costume design in film and television has a long history dating back to the early days of cinema and television popularity period. Costume designers work with the entire body of the actor. They design hair styles, clothing, and sometimes make-up to fit specific purpose or occasion, character, local, and so forth. (Sporre, 1985, p.110) Since then, costume design always conveys intimate time-period personalities, characters, and emotions on screen, as well as distinguishing them from one another. Most of the time costume designers were responsible for overseeing hair and makeup too.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Hollywood's Golden Age, costume design became more elaborate and glamorous. Designers such as Adrian and Edith Head were known for creating iconic looks for stars like Marlene Dietrich and Audrey Hepburn.

During the 1950s, the rising period of television, new challenges for costume design were begun. Television shows often had smaller budgets and faster production schedules than films, therefore, designers had to be resourceful and efficient in creating quick-production and easily recognizable on-screen costumes.

In the 1960s and 1970s, costume design became more experimental and diverse, reflecting the changing social and cultural environment of the time. Designers such as T.V. Aldredge and M. Canonero created innovative costumes for films like "The Great Gatsby" and "A Clockwork Orange".

In recent years, costume design has become an increasingly important aspect of film and television production, with designers like S. Powell and J. Durran creating award-winning designs for films like "The Favourite" and "Little Women".

2. Importance of costume design in storytelling and characterization.

Costume design creates unique and memorable costumes that are both visually striking and emotionally resonant. Costume designers can help to bring characters and worlds to life on screen and engage audiences in the narrative of the story. A character's costume can communicate a wealth of information about their personality, occupation, socio-economic status, and even their emotional state. Costume design can enhance storytelling and characterization in the ways of establishing time-period and setting, revealing character personality, supporting narrative themes, and creating visual cohesion. (Sarah, 2000)

Costume design can help to establish the time-period and setting of a story, whether it's a historical drama or a futuristic sci-fi epic. Using period-appropriate clothing, fabrics, and accessories, costume designers can transport audiences to a different time and place.

A character's costume can reveal a lot about their personality and traits. (Yin, 2023) For example, a protagonist dressed in bright colors may be perceived as optimistic and cheerful, while a villain in dark, ominous clothing may be perceived as dangerous or sinister.

Costume design can support the themes and motifs of a story. For example, a character who undergoes a personal transformation over the course of a story may be dressed in increasingly bold and vibrant clothing as they become more confident and self-assured.

Costume design can also create visual cohesion within a film or television series. A cohesive color palette or recurring motifs can help to tie together different characters and storylines, creating a more immersive viewing experience.

In conclusion, the authors wish to present necessary information for those inexperienced costume designers that can be used in their future career.

3. Elements of costume design in film and television work. (Clancy, 2014).

1. Color theory and palette selection.

Color defines our world and our emotions. It is usually seen before imagery. (Edith, 2006, p.2) Costume designers can create memorable and visually striking costumes that enhance the storytelling and engage audiences in the narrative by deploying color theory and palette selection. Colors can convey emotions, suggest personality traits, and create visual interest and contrast. Some key principles of color theory and palette selection for costume design are color wheel, mood and emotion, characterization, setting and context, and color palette.

Color wheel: Understanding the color wheel is essential for selecting and combining colors. The primary colors are red, blue, and yellow, while the secondary colors are green, purple, and orange. Tertiary colors are created by mixing primary and secondary colors. Complementary colors are located opposite each other on the color wheel and create the most contrast when paired together.

Mood and emotion: Different colors can evoke different emotions and moods. For example, warm colors such as red and orange can suggest passion and energy, while cool colors such as blue and green can suggest calmness and tranquility. Costume designers can use color to enhance the emotional impact of a scene or character.

Characterization: Color can also be used to suggest personality traits and establish characterization. For example, a character who wears a lot of red may be perceived as confident and assertive, while a character who wears a lot of green may be perceived as calm and nurturing.

Setting and context: The setting and context of a scene or story can also inform color choices. For example, a character in a jungle setting may be dressed in earthy greens and browns, while a character in a futuristic cityscape may be dressed in metallic silver and black.

Color palette: Costume designers can use a color palette to create visual cohesion and harmony within a film or television series. A limited color palette can help to tie together different characters and storylines and create a more cohesive visual experience.

2. Textiles and materials selection.

Right textiles and materials can enhance visual appeal of a costume, as well as support the story and characterizations. Key factors to be considered when selecting textiles and materials for costume design are appearance, comfort, durability, historical accuracy, symbolism, and budget.

Characterization: Visual appearance of fabric or material is one of the most important factors in textile selection. Texture, pattern, and color can all affect how the costume looks on screen and convey different messages about the character, i.e., a character dressed in luxurious silk or satin may be perceived as wealthy and sophisticated, while a character dressed in rough, rugged fabrics may be perceived as down-to-earth and practical.

Time-period and setting accuracy: Historical costumes often use period-appropriate fabrics, while science fiction and fantasy costumes may incorporate unique, futuristic materials to create a futuristic or otherworldly look. This may involve researching and sourcing fabrics that were available at the time.

Comfort: Actors need to feel comfortable in their costumes to deliver their best performances. Costume designers should consider factors such as breathability, flexibility, weight, and ease to work on.

Durability: Film and television productions often involve long shooting schedules and multiple takes, which can put wear and tear on costumes. Costume designers should select fabrics and materials that are durable enough to withstand the rigors of film production.

Texture and pattern: Texture and pattern of a textile can create visual interest and contrast in a costume. For example, a costume made of smooth, shiny fabrics may be paired with a textured or patterned accessory to create visual interest and depth.

Color and dyeing: Choice of textile and material can also influence the dyeing process and the resulting colors. Some materials may be more difficult to dye or may absorb color differently, which can affect the final appearance of the costume.

Budget: Cost of fabrics and materials can vary widely, so costume designers must also consider budget constraints when selecting textiles.

3. Silhouette and form.

Silhouette and form are important considerations in costume design for enhancing audience's engagement with the characters created by visual storytelling. Costume fits and shapes the body can convey character traits and contribute to the overall aesthetic of the production. Some key principles of silhouette and form in costume design are proportion, balance, movement, historical accuracy, characterization, and contrast.

The proportion of the costume should be appropriate for the character's body type and height. Costume designers must consider factors such as the actor's build, height, and weight when creating a costume silhouette. Costume should be balanced visually, with weight distributed evenly across the body. This can be achieved by padding or shaping devices to create the desired silhouette. Costumes must allow for ease of movement, especially if the character is required to perform physical actions such as fighting or dancing. The silhouette and form of costume must accommodate the actor's movements without hindering them. If the production is set in a specific historical period, costume designers must ensure that the silhouette and form of the costumes are accurate to that period. This may involve using undergarments or shaping devices to achieve the appropriate silhouette. Silhouette and form of the costume can also be used to convey character traits and personality, for example, a character who is confident and assertive may be dressed in a structured, tailored outfit with clean lines, while a character who is more carefree and laid-back may be dressed in loose flowing fabrics. The silhouette and form of the costume can be used to create contrast and visual interest within the production. This can be achieved with contrasting shapes, colors, and textures.

4. Accessories and props.

Accessories and props are important elements of costume for conveying character traits, enhancing the story, and contributing to overall aesthetic of the production. They fall into two general groups: set props, and hand props. (Sporre, 1985, p.112) Set props are part of the scene design, and hand props used by the actors. Important accessories and props determination factors are characterization, historical accuracy, story enhancement, color and texture, functionality, and symbolism.

Characterization: Accessories and props can be used to convey information about the character, such as their occupation, social status, or personality traits. For example, a

character who is a detective may wear a badge and carry a gun, while a character who is wealthy and glamorous may wear expensive jewelry and carry a designer handbag.

Historical accuracy: For a specific historical period, the accessories and props must be accurate to that period which need to research to find appropriate accessories and props for create time-period authentic look.

Story enhancement: Accessories and props can help to enhance the story by providing context or adding visual interest. For example, a character of a musician may carry a musical instrument, while a character of a detective may carry a notepad or magnifying glass.

Color and texture: Accessories and props can be used to add visual interest and contrast to the costume. Costume designers can use them to introduce different colors and textures that complement or contrast with the main costume.

Functionality: Accessories and props must be functional and appropriate for the character's needs and activities, for example, a character of a detective may need a functional gun holster, while a character of a dancer may need shoes with good traction and support.

Symbolism: Accessories and props can also be used to convey symbolic or metaphorical meanings, for example, a character who is carrying a briefcase may symbolize authority and power, while a character who is carrying a backpack may symbolize freedom and adventure.

Collaboration

Costume designers must work closely with directors, production designers, and other crew members to ensure that the costumes are cohesive with the overall vision, manage resources effectively, facilitate problem-solving, and continuity throughout the production. (Clancy, 2014).

Collaboration can **1. ensures cohesiveness with the overall vision of the production**, including elements such as the color palette, historical accuracy, and tone of the costumes; **2. facilitates a smooth workflow** to ensure that everyone is working together effectively and efficiently on the same page towards the same goals; **3. provides feedback and constructive criticism** from other members of production team which help designers to refine their designs and ensure for achieving desired effect; **4. helps to manage resources effectively** within a specific budget; **5. facilitates problem-solving** to meet the needs of the production; and **6. ensures continuity** in the costumes from scene-to-scene and shot-to-shot throughout the production.

Key principles of collaboration in costume design are as follows:

Communication: Clear communication can ensure that everyone is on the same page. Costume designers should support all director and production designer requirements by discussing vision and tone of the production, as well as any specific requirements.

Research: Costume designers should conduct research to gain a deeper understanding of the time-period, setting, and characters in the production and share their findings with the director, production designer, and other crew members to ensure that everyone is working from the same knowledge base.

Concept development: Costume designer should work with the director and production designer to develop a concept for the costumes that is consistent with the overall vision of the production. This concept should consider factors such as color, texture, silhouette, and historical accuracy.

Budgeting: Costume designers should collaborate with the production manager to determine the realistic production budget and work within the constraints.

Fabrication and sourcing: Costume designers must work closely with a costume supervisor and costume department manager and collaborate with costume makers and shoppers to source materials.

Continuity: Costume designers should work with the script supervisor and other crew members to ensure that the costumes are consistent from scene-to-scene and shot-to-shot.

Flexibility: Costume designers must be flexible and willing to make any necessary changes according to the needs of director, production designer, and other crew members.

Conceptualization

1. Methods for developing costume designs. (Jing, 2021)

Costume designs are a creative process by exploring different design ideas and creating costumes to gain visually striking and consistent with overall vision of the production. Design steps may start from sketching, rendering, digital design, draping, and collaboration with the production team.

Sketching is a traditional method for developing costume designs. Designers can use a pencil and paper to create rough sketches of the costume designs, which can be refined over time. Sketching allows for quick and easy exploration of different costume design ideas.

Rendering is a more detailed form of sketching that involves adding shading and texture to the costume design. This can be done using markers, colored pencils, or other

drawing tools. Rendering can help to bring the costume design to life and provide a more realistic representation of the final design.

Digital design is becoming an increasingly popular method for developing costume designs. Designers can use software like Adobe Photoshop or Sketchbook Pro to create digital sketches and renderings of the costume designs. Digital design allows for greater flexibility and precision in the design process.

Draping involves creating a costume design by draping fabric directly onto a mannequin or dress form. This method can provide a more three-dimensional understanding of the design and can be particularly useful for creating period costumes or costumes with unique shapes.

Collaboration with other members of the production team, such as the director and production designer, can be a valuable method for developing costume designs. Collaborating can help to ensure that the costume designs are consistent with the overall vision of the production.

2. Creation of mood boards and color palettes.

Creating mood boards and color palettes can help costume designers to establish the mood and tone of a production, as well as to ensure that the color choices for the costumes are consistent with overall aesthetic of the production. (Weaver, 2019) Tips for creating mood boards and color palettes for costume design are as follows:

Gather inspiration: Before creating a mood board or color palette, it's important to gather inspiration from a variety of sources, including images, fabrics, and color swatches. These can come from historical research, character analysis, or other design references.

Choose a theme: Once you have gathered inspiration, choose a theme or concept that will guide your mood board and color palette. This can be a specific time-period, a particular character, or an overall aesthetic.

Create a visual mood board: A visual mood board is a collage of images, fabrics, and color swatches that capture the theme or concept you have chosen. This can be created either physically, using a bulletin board or sketchbook, or digitally, using tools like Pinterest or Adobe Photoshop.

Select a color palette: Based on the inspiration gathered and the theme or concept chosen, select a color palette that will guide your costume design choices. Consider the emotional impact of different colors and how they can be used to convey character traits or establish a mood.

Apply the color palette to costume design: Once having established a color palette, use it to guide the costume design choices. Consider how different colors can be combined and how they can be used to establish a hierarchy of importance among the characters.

Costume production

1. Application of costume designs in real production.

Bringing costume designs to life is a complex process that requires a combination of skills and techniques, including pattern making, sewing, and costume fittings. By working closely with a team of skilled professionals, costume designers can ensure that their designs are brought to life in a way that is visually stunning and consistent with the overall vision of the production. (Clancy, 2014). Steps of the process are as follows:

Pattern making: Involves creating a template for each piece of the costume, including the shirt, pants, jacket, and any other accessories. This is done by drafting a pattern on paper or using a computer-aided design (CAD) program. The pattern is then cut out of muslin fabric and sewn together to create a sample garment.

Sewing: Once the patterns have been created and tested, the costume can be sewn together using the final fabric. This is typically done by a team of skilled seamstresses who follow the pattern instructions and use a variety of sewing techniques to create the finished garment. The sewing process can take several days or weeks, depending on the complexity of the costume.

Costume fittings: Once the costume has been sewn together, it's time for a fitting. This involves trying the costume on the actor to ensure that it fits properly and looks good on camera. The costume designer may adjust the costume based on the actor's feedback and the director's vision for the character.

Final touches: After the costume fitting, any final touches can be made to the costume, such as adding buttons, zippers, or other embellishments. The costume may also be distressed or aged to make it look more realistic and in line with the overall aesthetic of the production.

2. Budgeting and time management.

Budgeting and time management can be done by creating a detailed budget, prioritizing costume designs, managing time effectively, and considering rental options. The designed costume must be brought to life in both visually stunning and cost-effective way. (Clancy, 2014). Tips for managing these important factors are as follows:

Create a detailed budget: Before beginning costume production, it's important to realize a detailed budget for all associated expenses. This should include cost of materials, labor, and other expenses, such as shipping or rental fees. An appropriate budget will help to ensure costume production stays on track and on time.

Prioritize costume designs: Depending on the production schedule and budget constraints, it may not be possible to create all costume designs at once. Prioritizing the designs and creating an effective production schedule can help to ensure that the most important costumes are completed on time and within budget.

Manage time effectively: Costume production is a time-consuming process, so it's important to manage time effectively. This may involve setting production milestones and deadlines, creating an adequate production time schedule, and working closely with the production team to ensure an on-time work completion.

Consider rental options: Depending on the budget and time constraints, it may be more cost-effective to rent costumes rather than creating them from scratch. This can help to save time and money, while still ensuring that the costumes are high-quality and consistent with the overall vision of production.

Conduct research for costume design.

Key steps in conducting research for costume design (Britton, 1999), (Stella, 1997) should started with; **1. Read the script** thoroughly to provide an understanding of the time-period, setting, and characters in the production, then; **2. Historical research** to gain a deeper understanding of the fashion and clothing styles of that period (if the production is set in a particular historical period), which include researching clothing, construction techniques, fabrics, and color palettes, then; **3. Character analysis** to determine how the costumes can contribute to the storytelling and character development by considering the character's personality, background, and occupation to inform their costume choices, then; **4. Visual research** which involves gathering images that can inspire and inform the costume design include photographs, paintings, and other visual references, costume designers can create a mood board or inspiration board to organize their visual research, then; **5. Visit museums and archives** to provide an opportunity to see historical clothing and textiles up close which provide inspiration for costume design and help to inform fabric and color choices, then; **6. Collaborate with other departments:** such as the production designer, to ensure that the costumes are consistent with the overall visual aesthetic of the production, then; **7. Use**

online resources including historical fashion websites and digital archives which is a useful tool in conducting research for costume design.

Costume designers can organize their research materials effectively and efficiently, leading to a more cohesive and successful costume design. Techniques for collecting and organizing research materials are:

Create a physical or digital inspiration board: An inspiration board can be created either physically, using a bulletin board or a sketchbook, or digitally, using tools like Pinterest or Adobe Photoshop. This board can be used to collect and organize images, swatches, and other visual references for the costume design.

Use a research journal or notebook: A research journal or notebook can be used to collect and organize notes from historical research and character analysis. This can be helpful in keeping track of important details and references for the costume design.

Create a digital folder system: A digital folder system can be used to organize images, documents, and other research materials on a computer or in the cloud. This system can be organized by time-period, character, or other categories that are relevant to the production.

Use color-coded labels or tags: If using physical research materials, color-coded labels or tags can be used to categorize and organize materials by theme, time-period, or character.

Create a physical Swatch book: If using fabrics or other physical materials, a swatch book can be created to organize the different fabrics and materials by color, texture, and other attributes.

Use a collaborative tool: Collaborative tools like Google Drive or Dropbox can be used to share research materials and design ideas with other members of the production team.

Famous talented film and TV costume designers.

There are numerous talented film and TV costume designers around the world, here are some notable individuals and a brief analysis of their typical works.

1. Sandy Powell: a highly acclaimed British costume designer known for her work on films such as Shakespeare in Love, The Aviator, and The Favourite. Her typical works often feature opulent and meticulously detailed costumes that capture the essence of different time periods. Powell's designs are known for their rich textures, vibrant colors, and careful attention to historical accuracy or fantastical elements.

2. Colleen Atwood: an American costume designer who has collaborated with renowned directors like Tim Burton and has an impressive filmography that includes "Edward Scissorhands," "Alice in Wonderland," and "Memoirs of a Geisha." Atwood's typical works often incorporate elements of fantasy and whimsy. Her designs are characterized by intricate details, imaginative interpretations, and a keen sense of storytelling through costumes.

3. Catherine Martin: an Australian costume designer and production designer known for her collaborations with director Baz Luhrmann on films like "Moulin Rouge!" and "The Great Gatsby." Her typical works are visually stunning and display a fusion of different eras and styles. Her designs often incorporate lavish period costumes combined with contemporary elements, creating a unique and visually striking aesthetic.

4. Jacqueline Durran: a British costume designer, has worked on notable films such as "Pride & Prejudice," "Atonement," and "Anna Karenina." Her typical works often involve period dramas and literary adaptations. Her designs excel in capturing the nuances of characters and their respective time periods with meticulous attention to details, fabrics, and colors, resulting in costumes that beautifully convey the emotions and social context of the stories.

5. Joanna Johnston: a British costume designer known for her collaborations with director Steven Spielberg, including films such as "Saving Private Ryan," "War Horse," and "Lincoln." Her typical works often encompass historical dramas and war films. Johnston's designs focus on authenticity and realism, meticulously recreating the attire of specific time periods. Her attention to detail and ability to convey character traits through costumes contribute to the overall immersive experience of the films.

6. Tim Yip: a renowned Chinese costume and production designer who gained international recognition for his work on the film "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." His typical works often involve historical and fantasy genres, showcasing intricate and visually stunning costumes. Yip's designs often incorporate traditional Chinese elements, rich colors, and elegant silhouettes, capturing the essence of Chinese culture and storytelling.

7. William Chang Suk-ping: a highly respected Hong Kong costume designer and art director known for his collaborations with director Wong Kar-Wai. His works, such as "In the Mood for Love" and "2046," often feature stylish and visually striking costumes that evoke a sense of nostalgia and romanticism. Chang's designs are characterized by attention to detail, meticulous tailoring, and a unique blend of contemporary and period aesthetics.

8. Jo Sang-Gyeong: a highly acclaimed Korean costume designer who has worked on numerous films and TV dramas. He has collaborated with renowned directors like Park Chan-Wook on films like "The Handmaiden" and "Oldboy." Jo Sang-Gyeong's designs often reflect meticulous attention to detail, capturing the historical and cultural nuances of the stories.

9. Choi Se-Yeon: a respected costume designer who has worked on various popular Korean TV dramas. She has contributed to the success of dramas like "Mr. Sunshine," "Crash Landing on You," and "Goblin." Choi Se-Yeon's designs skillfully blend contemporary fashion with traditional Korean elements, adding depth and character to the on-screen personas.

10. Neeta Lulla: a renowned Indian costume designer who has worked on numerous Bollywood films. She has designed costumes for iconic movies like "Devdas," "Jodhaa Akbar," and "Mohenjo Daro." Neeta Lulla's work is characterized by its grandeur, attention to detail, and ability to capture the essence of the characters and the time periods they represent.

11. Manish Malhotra: a celebrated fashion designer and costume stylist in India, known for his work in both Bollywood and the fashion industry. He has designed costumes for a wide range of films, including "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge," "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham," and "Kal Ho Naa Ho." Manish Malhotra's designs often exude elegance, glamour, and a blend of traditional and contemporary aesthetics.

12. Nadezhda Balandina: a highly regarded Russian costume designer who has worked on numerous films. She has collaborated with acclaimed directors like Andrei Tarkovsky on films such as "Mirror" and "Stalker." Balandina's designs often reflect a poetic and atmospheric quality, seamlessly integrating with the film's visual storytelling.

13. Elena Okopnaya: a prominent costume designer known for her work in Russian cinema. She has collaborated with director Andrey Zvyagintsev on films like "Leviathan" and "Loveless." Okopnaya's designs effectively capture the characters' emotions and reflect the socio-political contexts of the narratives, contributing to the overall atmosphere and realism of the films.

14. Ekachai Uekrongtham: a respected Thai costume designer known for his work in both film and theater. His typical works often include historical dramas and contemporary films. Uekrongtham's designs showcase a meticulous attention to detail, with a focus on capturing the cultural nuances of Thai traditions and storytelling. His costumes often blend traditional elements with modern aesthetics, creating visually striking ensembles.

15. Pisitakun Kuantalaeng: a renowned Thai costume designer who has worked on numerous Thai films and TV productions. His typical works often feature historical dramas and

period pieces. Kuantalaeng's designs reflect a deep understanding of Thai history and culture, with a keen eye for authenticity. His costumes showcase the traditional fabrics, intricate patterns, and rich colors that are characteristic of Thai heritage.

Conclusion

Costume design plays a vital role in film and television, helping to establish the world of story, develop and imitate characters, and communicate important information to audience. By carefully selecting fabrics, colors, textures, and accessories, costume designers can create designs that not only look visually stunning but also contribute to the storytelling and character development of the production.

Costume design can be used to establish the time-period and location of the story, to differentiate between characters, and to communicate information about their personality, status, and relationships. It can also be used to create iconic looks that become instantly recognizable and influence popular culture for years to come.

Successful costume design requires collaboration and communication with the director, production designer, and other crew members, as well as research into historical and cultural contexts, character analysis, and visual research. It also requires skill in design, pattern making, sewing, and time management, as well as the ability to work within budget constraints.

As technology continues to advance, the future of costume design in the entertainment industry will undoubtedly be shaped by new tools and techniques. Digital design and 3D printing are already starting to play a role in the industry, allowing designers to create more complex and detailed designs more efficiently.

In addition to technological advancements, there is also a growing awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the entertainment industry. This is likely to have an impact on costume design which needs accurate representation of different cultures and identities in their work. However, the fundamentals of costume design are unlikely to change.

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