NFTS | **NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL**

<u>**Course outline: Production Design**</u>

The MA in Production Design is a specialisation within the broader **MA in Film and Television**.

Year One
There is now a three-week foundation course for first year students which identifies the basic design building blocks. This involves a visit to a Grade 1 historic building, a measured survey on site, followed by drawing up of plans and elevations in the studio. This allows students to 'level' out (as some students come with no background in technical drawing) and understand the basic drawing techniques used in the art department.

The following projects and workshops indicate a range of subjects covered on the course. There may be variations in this programme during the year.

"Springboard" Cross Specialisation Introductory Workshop
A week of Masterclasses, films and workshops. It is designed in order for all disciplines to meet and work with each other.
The design students do a full day First Aid course during this week.

Screen Arts (Every Monday of Term 1)
An introduction to the moving image, looking at cinematic and televisual language through the prism of storytelling. It investigates how the main crafts of cinema and television, screenwriting, cinematography, design, editing, sound and music each relate to the way filmmaking puts across narrative ideas.
In Term 2 there are Monday masterclasses and trips relevant to the art department.

Health & Safety
Training in the principles of Health and Safety relevant to the department, including procedures and process for risk assessments will be scheduled in during the first two terms.

Take One Painting (Cross specialisation workshop with Visual Effects (VFX) and Cinematography)

The students research the historical background of a given painting paying attention to perspective and obvious light sources, period furnishing and architectural detail. They analyse the space of the painting and produce a plan and sections of the space to scale. The design students collaborate on the working drawings and details of the selected space. They then collaborate on the build and paint finishes as well as the dressing of the set. Cinematography students undertake the lighting of the set and shooting. Each design student draws up an object that could be in the set, which is then built in the computer as an 'asset' by the VFX students in Post Production. This is designed to demonstrate the importance of the interaction between the Art Department and Visual Effects Department. The students are guided full time by an industry professional with industry craft tutors coming in when required during the build process.

Character of Place (Cross specialisation workshop with Animation & Cinematography)

Working in groups, students will design and build a still that evokes the *character of place* within specified parameters on a given axis. Emphasis is on the minimal use of formal elements (through the choice of objects and the significance of their positioning within the frame). The creation of mood and atmosphere with *light* will be fundamental in conveying the intention. Each student will work within the same *special* framework. This material will form the basis of stories to be developed further in the animation pixilation. Through observation and analysis students will have acquired an insight in to the significance of material, nature of light and objects in the telling of stories.
Students are guided full time by an industry professional.

Computer Aided Design

In the first year there are 2 x two-week Rhino training workshops. The first concentrates on 3D modelling, the second on technical draughting for the art department. After this time the students with no prior knowledge will be able to produce basic models and basic plans and elevations. This is a foundation on which to build or an opportunity to expand knowledge.

Film Design Module: Fantasy

The visual and physical interpretation of fantasy writing for the screen is an irresistible challenge for production designers. This is a paper project which allows the student to develop their technical skills and their own personal design style. Students choose a given story and develop a set as if it were to be built on a large stage at a UK studio.
Practical tuition in draughting, model making and visualisation is included, together with individual tutorials which address both the script and the design process.
This Module is supported by an industry professional.

First Year Film

Throughout the first-year ideas and scripts will be developed for a short film which is shot and edited during the autumn term. Scripts will be developed by the producers and directors in conjunction with cinematography, production design and sound.
Each design student will work on one film which may include a set build, although this cannot be guaranteed.
Throughout this period, script analysis and budgeting will be addressed, design students are supported by an industry professional.

Film Architecture Foreign Setting/Historical Period Part 1

The aim of this module is to further develop architectural knowledge, 'design for space' skills and ideas by addressing a piece set in a foreign country and in an architectural setting of a previous historical period. It also aims to develop technical drawing, detailing and visualising skills. Practical tuition in draughting and visualisation is included.

Animation and Design Workshop

This is a one-week workshop with the Animation Directors to explore ideas through visualisation fast interaction and then further development of ideas into a concrete visual form.

Reviews and end of year assessments
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Commencing January 2024

Year Two
The following projects and workshops indicate a range of subjects covered on the course. There may be variations in this programme during the year.

Introduction to Unreal Engine
In collaboration with VFX and Games. This is a one week 'taster' workshop.

Research Workshop with Phil Clark

Each student will choose one script offered by Phil and with his guidance find research visuals
that in an interview situation would explain the designer's ideas of atmosphere and environment. This workshop will give another opportunity for students to articulate and present their ideas with clarity.

Set Decoration Workshop

This fast workshop led by a leading industry Set Decorator and Production Buyer will explain the basics of set decoration. The students, working in teams, research the period, visit prop houses and using visual reference and photographs will describe how they have chosen to decorate and furnish a given set.

Animation Graduation Film

Each Production Design student will collaborate with an Animation director on the design and development of an Animation film, both live action and digital. In some cases, this may only involve the pre-visualisation of the design and possibly the characters. In others this could be sets for stop frame animation films.
Students are supported by tutors with a specialism in Art Direction for Animation.

Summer Fiction Film

Collaborating with a Fiction Director, Cinematographer and all the other crafts each student will design a film, again this may or may not require a set build. It is hoped that each film will have a substantial design element either on a stage or on location. The design students will be supported throughout by an industry professional.

Film Architecture Part 2: Foreign Setting Historical Period
Module continues

Visualisation Tutorials

These visits are tailored to each student, helping them to develop their own style using a mixture of hand drawing and appropriate software. These occur throughout the year dependent on availability of working concept artists but cannot be guaranteed.

Portfolio Development and Industry interviews

This is an ongoing process during the later part of the second year. Design students are assisted in the presentation of a comprehensive range of work to include technical drawings (both hand and computer generated), visuals, 3D images, visuals and research material.

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The portfolio, which needs to be in a hard copy form and PDF is the instrument of a design student selling themselves. During the last few months of the year students will meet a number of leading designers, supervising art directors and art directors in a formal environment in order to get varied feedback about their portfolios and enlarge their network of industry connections. This is also an opportunity for design students to become accustomed to presenting themselves and their work. At this time we also encourage students to begin building up a website.

Extra curricular

Throughout their time at the school students may become involved with a Games Designer or design a television graduation film if suitable. Either of these are in addition to the curriculum Modules and Workshops.

Production Design Dissertation

During the year the students also complete their Dissertation module (the outline of which dissertation is delivered in Year 1).

As part of the work necessary to qualify for an MA, each student is required to produce an independent written dissertation or video essay. This runs from the start of the 1st Year to April of the 2nd Year. Following discussions with the Production Design Department Dissertation Tutor, and Screen Arts tutors in the first half of the 1st year, students deliver 500-word outline proposal by June of the 1st year; 2000-word detailed proposal and structure by November of 1st Year (students may not progress into 2nd year if they fail to deliver this). Full draft dissertation of 7,000-10,000 words (including sources and bibliography) must be delivered by February of 2nd Year and following discussion with tutors, final version of dissertation by April of the 2nd Year.

An alternative option of a twenty minute video essay is also available to MA students.

The aim should be to undertake original research of an investigative nature, which extends the boundaries of specialist knowledge within particular areas of production design.

The dissertation may encompass any aspect of production design, but should focus primarily on the aesthetic and creative aspects of films and filmmaking, rather than the business or practical sides of production. Students are advised to use the dissertation to help explore and develop their own practice, interests and identities as creative film production designers.