Exhibition

Bewegte Räume moving spaces

Production Design + Film

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»Moving Spaces. Production Design + Film«
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Moving Spaces. Production Design + Film
Edited by
Kristina Jaspers, Peter Mänz and Nils Warnecke

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FOREWORD

Moving Spaces. Production Design + Film

by Kristina Jaspers, Peter Mänz and Nils Warnecke

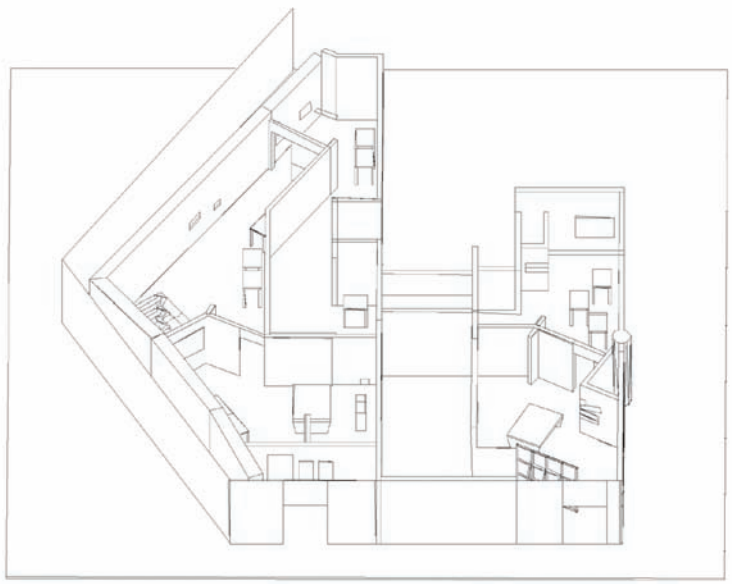
Filmic spaces are moving spaces. They set the framework for the movement of the actor, demarcating his radius of action. It is the movement of the camera – panning, zooming, and tracking shots – that reveals the dimensions of filmic space. Sometimes the focus is on a face and the background remains blurry: but the movement of the actor and the camera observing him allows the surroundings to be imagined. Another time, a long shot shows the Spartan emptiness or oppressive opulence of a set, or it forces us into claustrophobic spaces. The screen develops a three-dimensional pull, drawing the audience right into filmic space. The filmic space locates the story, visualises it, becomes its mirror image – the mirror image of an inner movement.

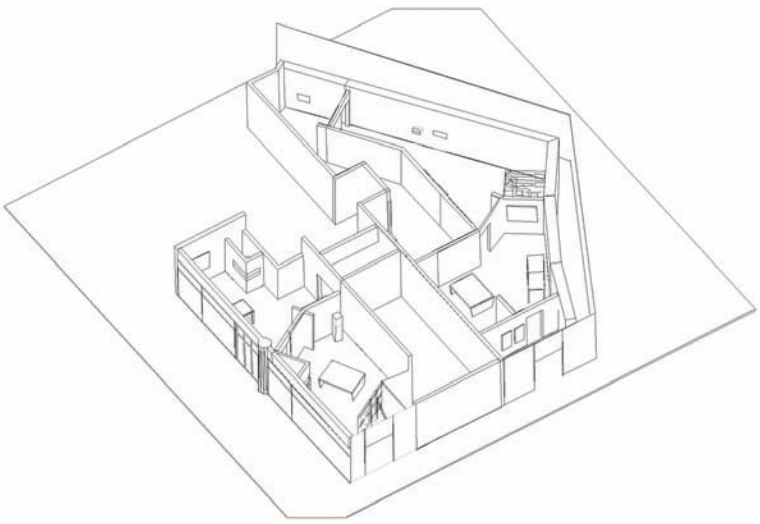
Past, Present, Future

Filmic spaces are full of signs. We decipher them as in real spaces. We find a protagonist pleasant because her home is perhaps furnished like that of a friend. An office building seems modern to us because we have seen a similar one in a recent architecture journal. Production designers work with clichés in the positive sense when they seek to capture past, present, or future. How did it look ten, fifty, a hundred years ago? How does one design the here and now? What is to come? Art directors have to find spatial solutions that satisfy our ideas, which we can »read«, decipher,

OFFRET (1985/86) | Andrej Tarkovskij on the set (© Svenska Filminstitutet, Stockholm)

and interpret, even if we haven't seen the subject with our own eyes. In the case of historical subjects, a compromise is sought between historical correctness and artistic freedom. A film dealing with the present day or science fiction can also become an historical document. Models for the design of filmic spaces are to be found everywhere. In books of photographs and furniture catalogues, in the visual arts, and in architecture. Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS (1925/26) – an incunabulum of the modern city and of the city of the future – was repeatedly associated by contemporary and later critics with the architectural avant-garde of the 1920s. Jacques Tati's MON ONCLE (1956-58) can be interpreted as a satire of Le Corbusier's view of architecture. Filmic spaces mostly reflect the aesthetics and design of their time. At the same time, production designers are often inspired by works of art. In some films these references are clearly recognisable, for example in Dante Ferretti's sets for Jean-Jacques Annaud's THE NAME OF THE ROSE (1985/86), in Jan Roelfs' and Ben van Os' design for Peter Greenaway's THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER (1988/89). Some films quote their own genre or make references to historical motifs. These aesthetic references are demonstrated in the exhibition. The design of filmic space is never simply a copy of reality, it always means creating an artificial world.





a | b | Exhibition »Moving Spaces«
3-D-model, isometric mappings: Ingrid Jebram

Production Design and the Dramaturgy of Film

The exhibition examines the means by which the design of a film not only creates visual spaces but also helps generate the dramaturgy of a film. This is shown through five spatial constellations – spatial situations which fulfil a specific drama-

turgical function and which show certain similarities or affinities across all variations and regardless of time and genre:

Showrooms of power visualise a world of hierarchies and dependencies. Heavy furniture, smooth, cool surfaces are characteristic. Large panorama windows and glass façades convey apparent transparency while permitting supervision and control.

Private spaces are something quite different. They constitute a place to withdraw to, they offer protection, reflect their occupants while constituting their stage. Small details of furnishings reveal personal preferences or hidden conflicts. A house can be for representational purposes, it can be a refuge – or merely a crumbling façade.

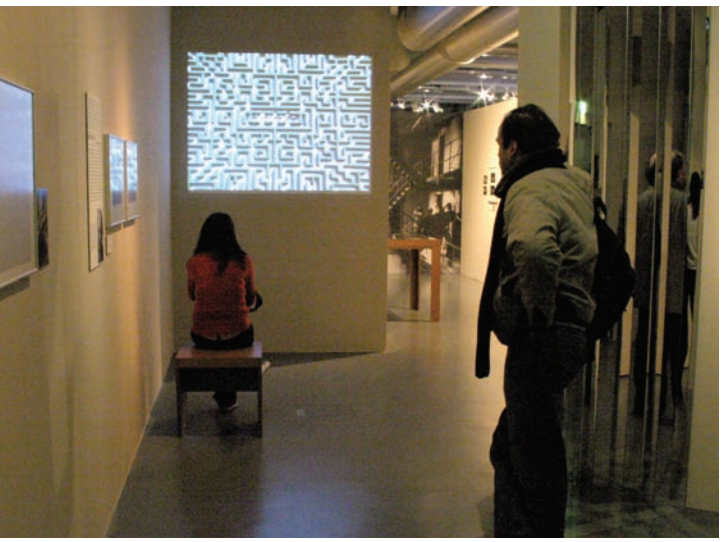
Labyrinths appear primarily to be psychological spaces. Tracking shots and cutting create bewildering space sequences with no way out. Sensations of fear, forlornness, and helplessness are deliberately generated. Mirrors show the world of dreams or nightmares and the unconscious.

a | Section »Spaces of Power«
b | Section »Stage«
Computer simulation: Ingrid Jebram

We encounter **transit spaces** primarily in the course of one of modern man's fundamental experiences: movement. Public spaces like streets, hotels, airports, and waiting rooms are mostly functional in design; materials like glass, plastics, and metal are used. Transit spaces often stand for a change experienced by the protagonists or their forlornness.

Stages provide a look behind the scenes. The intermediate space between reality and illusion becomes visible. The static, central perspective of the theatre is undermined by the camera work. At the same time, the game with stylisation and aestheticization is exploited. Characteristic is the stress on light and colour dramaturgy and the accentuation of acting and language.

Spaces of power, private spaces, labyrinths, transit spaces, stages – there are several



a | b | c | Impressions of the exhibiton »Spaces of Power«, »Private Spaces«, »Labyrinths« Photos: Subuddha Kellner

possibilities for approaching the exhibition: one can investigate the five spatial constellations, the similarities and differences in filmic implementation. And with the help of production designer biographies, one can follow their personal style and approach.

Art and Craft

There does not appear to be a classical training. Even if film colleges now provide courses in scenography, it is striking how many major production designers came to their profession by other routes. Many began their professional careers as set designers in the theatre; others had chosen an academic path, for example studying art, architecture, or design. Artistic creativity, workmanship, a high degree of flexibility and communicative competence, as well as a capacity to improvise and organise: the production designer must have a wide range of talents and abilities. The two poles of the profession: creative visualisation and solution-related implementation; while keeping the production within the budget. Working methods often differ strikingly. Meticulous designs that are works of art in themselves stand alongside hasty sketches; models are supplemented by computer animations. Some designs give details of camera perspectives and the texture of materials, others tend to evoke an atmosphere. Also decisive is whether a scene is to be shot in the studio or on location. Photos document the

hunt for original locations; floor plans and building plans illustrate the conception and implementation of a studio set. Building interiors in the studio permits work under optimum lighting and sound conditions, whereas shooting on location can enhance authenticity.

Filmic spaces are transient. Structures on location are demolished after shooting, studio sets are disposed of or refashioned into new sets. Designs and models are destroyed when the film is finished. This is why the set design collection of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek is a treasure trove of the cultural cinematic heritage. One of the early exhibitions of the Kinemathek, entitled »Creative Production Design« was staged over thirty years ago, from 1 February to 12 March 1971 in Berlin. It concentrated on a period in which the »opposition between studio film and exterior film … had reached dramatic ideological intensity«, the great era of the German studio film. It offered opportunities to analyse and compare, and the exhibition catalogue noted: »Many sketches in large portfolios on wide stands are easy for the visitor to open and peruse«. The digital age offers new possibilities for searching and discovery. In the »Moving Spaces« exhibition, the designs by production designers Robert Herlth, Erich Kettelhut, and Franz Schroedter exhibited in 1971 are placed in relation to work by Ken Adam, Hein Heckroth, and Alexandre Trauner. Their visual eloquence and creative refinement puts them in a world class.

We would like to thank all our colleagues from the Filmmuseum Berlin – Deutsche Kinemathek, especially the director of collections Werner Sudendorf and the members of the set design archive staff Gerald Narr and Anett Sawall, as well as all the lenders who have made this exhibition possible with their collections. Heartfelt thanks for conceptual cooperation goes also to the team of the Retrospective: Connie Betz, Ralph Eue, Gabriele Jatho and Hans Helmut Prinzler.

SHOWROOMS OF POWER

Showrooms of Power

by Ralph Eue

Demonic megalomaniacs, Machiavellian extremists, and all of them with a doctorate: Dr. No, Dr. Mabuse, Dr. Caligari. But there are more: Dr. Strangelove, Dr. Frankenstein, Dr. Evil, Dr. Otto Octavius or Dr. Fu-Man-Chu – although the latter only got his title from the German distributors. In popular cinema, scientists, especially natural scientists, often stand for disreputable, unbalanced characters operating at the interface between nature, technology, and society. The complex fabric of personal emotions, technophile fantasies, and ethic constraints is disrupted. The sensitive interaction between social, psychological, and biochemical processes is convulsed. The Will to Power as a bonus track of the Seven Deadly Sins. Whenever stories of power, control, and domination are told in the cinema, an intermingling between plot, characters, and space is inevitable. For instance, the places that Ken Adam assigns to the evil hero in DR. NO (Terence Young, 1962) reflect his personality, just as, vice versa, the personality of Dr. No mirrors the places he occupies. Neither cause and effect nor effect and cause, but rather parallel phenomena.

Cinematic spaces where domination is at issue aim to overwhelm. Cinematic spaces that address conditions of control draw on the fear of impenetrability. Cinematic spaces that serve as scenes of power take a sweeping stance with a grand gesture. In his essay »Architecture. Essai sur l'art,« Louis-Etienne Boullé (1728-1799), the

METROPOLIS (1925/26)
a | Animation drawing: Erich Kettelhut
b | Design: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

early master of monumental architecture, described monstrosity as the acceptable (or even desirable) side effect of all monumentality. The image of size has such power over our senses that even the idea that it is terrible still arouses a feeling of admiration in us.

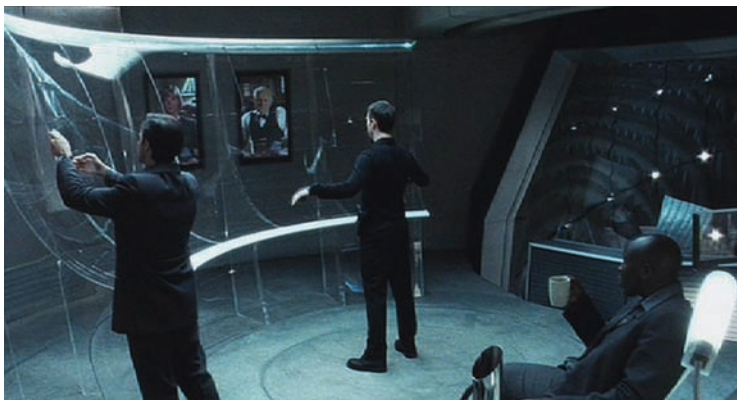
Monumental Architecture

On a wide range of occasions, the production designer Ken Adam has pointed out that his dynamic spatial inventions are based on exaggeration. And he has stressed that most of his designs go back to simple linear compositions, realized in materials that hardly anyone before him had used for film design. In DR. NO they included copper, brass, steel, and plastic. That was in the early 1960s. More than forty years later, Alex McDowell was responsible for the production design for Steven Spielberg's MINORITY REPORT (2001/02). Here, too, many material hitherto very unusual in production design were used: large-scale plasma surfaces, transparent walls, curvaceous glass ramps, stairs, and corridors free of right angles. And, finally, the half-temple-half-laboratory of the »precog dome,« whose walls are covered with crystalline, translucent varnish, and seem to have their own, changing luminosity. 75 years before MINORITY REPORT, the materiality of METROPOLIS (1925/26) is also eloquent. For example, Fritz Lang and his production designers Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, and Karl Vollbrecht could quite conceivably have found inspiration for their urban fantasy in the »model for a glass sky-

scraper« (1922) by Mies von der Rohe, or in the buildings by the disciples of Poelzig who in the mid-1920s formed the »Group of Young Architects« and, precisely at the period when the Fritz Lang film was being shot, were making a name for themselves with ground-breaking works like the steel house in Dessau (Gerof Muche/Richard Paulick, 1926) or the concrete structures of the Berlin Kant garages (Hans Zweigenthal/Richard Paulick, 1928/29): glass facades, steel or reinforced concrete structures. However, the vision of METROPOLIS, this monumental fantasy of wood and plaster, essentially conveys the impression that the universe of the film is one of stone. And only this stone was able to convey a sense of the vision being valid for all time, as eternal as everything made of stone appears to be.

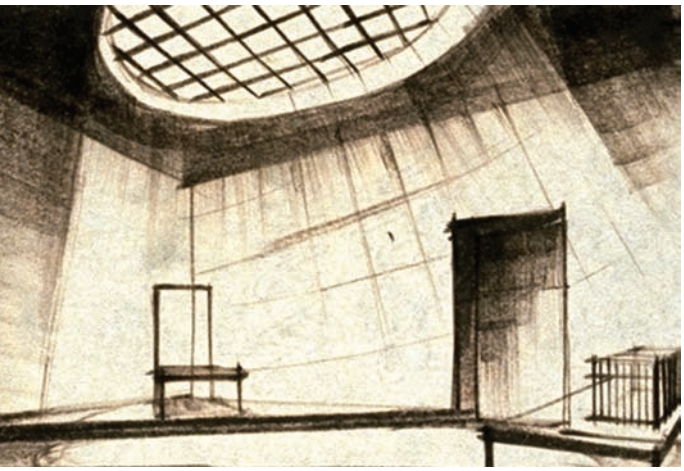
Regulatory and Supervisory Powers

Joh Fredersen's office in Fritz Lang's film is located high up in these stone mountains, and for decades was to remain an archetype for the command post of a captain of industry. Oversized, heavy doors isolate the room from the outside world. The altar-like, semi-circular director's desk, which in a real office would have been turned by 90 or 180 degrees, is dominated by what were then the latest mechanical and electronic communication equipment: a Morse apparatus, luminous scales for stock exchange prices, and a video telephone. In the background the visual »hit« of this set: the gigantic window through which Fredersen (Alfred Abel), the master of Metropolis, looks out on the city. A multifunctional decorative element: Fredersen can survey the city – his empire. He is the master of Metropolis. The lattice patterning of the office window functions first of all as a visual means of increasing background depth and secondly as a social »separation sign« and an expressive symbol of the occupant's regulatory and control power. The horizontal rather than vertical format of the window in itself gives architectural expression to a decidedly modern position. It reflects what Le Corbusier in his five points on new architecture in »Vers une archi-



MINORITY REPORT (2001/02)
a | Computer simulation: Alex McDowell (© Alex McDowell, London)
b | Scene still »Pre-Cog-Dome«

tecture« (1923), published two years before the shooting of METROPOLIS began, had stressed to be one of the essential characteristics of modern building: »The affected high windows will disappear along with the unpleasant mullions and window piers. Rooms will thus be evenly lighted from wall to wall. Experiments have shown that the illumination intensity in a room lighted in this manner is eight times that in a room with high windows and the same window surface. The entire history of architecture is concerned exclusively with wall openings. Reinforced concrete suddenly offers the possibility of maximum illumination through the horizontal window.«
Certain basic modules for the filmic/fictional/spatial staging of power can be derived from these examples: For example, there is the play with symbolically highly charged surfaces, – e.g., very costly, very dangerous, very new – and the dynamic deconstruction of established geometric form repertoires and of perspectives. Furthermore, staging the tension of the panoptic principle plays an important role in positioning power constellations: Who can observe? Who is observed? And, finally, the juxtaposition of state-of-the-art technology and archaic elements should be mentioned. The technical points to the organic, the organic to the symbolic.

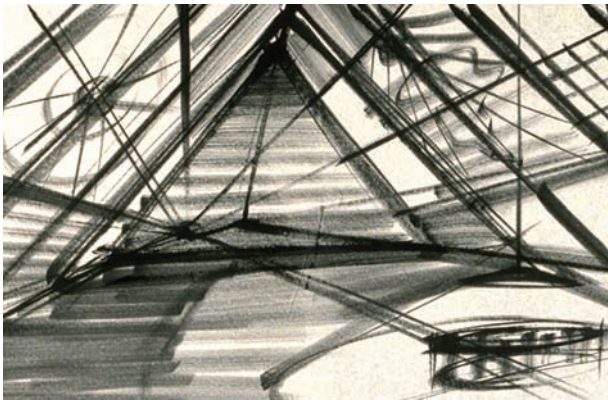


DR. NO (1962)
a | Design: Ken Adam (© Bibliothèque du Film, Paris)
b | Scene still

Vertical Structures

One of the most imposing and best documented examples of the latter is certainly Ken Adams set for the »war room« in Stanley Kubrick's DR. STRANGEGLOVE OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB (1963/64). In the catalogue for the Kubrick exhibition at the Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main (2004), Boris Hars-Tschachotin describes the gigantic ring of light that hovers above the conference table and the heads of the actors: »This special light, developed and built for the infernal poker game for the world, becomes the key element of the entire space. It positively burns into the retina and the memory of the observer and opens up a broad space of association. ... This ring of light resembles the glowing, lucid pupil of an abstract eye radiating de-

monically in the Janus-headed cosmos of the war room.« Also crucial for the »war room« is its location far beneath the surface of the Earth: »The war room takes up the metaphor of the cavern, but reverses the positive connotations of the image into its opposite. The protective cavern becomes a place of horror, of de-individualization; it becomes the incubator of a megalomania bent on destroying humankind. … The sloping walls and ceiling of the war room concentrate the entire spatial form ineluctably into a sense of weighing down and pressure. The light plays on the plastic forms of the concrete beams and bracings, setting strong contrasts and creating the oppressive spatial effect indicated by hatching lines in the drawings.«



DR. STRANGELOVE (1963/64)
a | Design: Ken Adam
(© Bibliothèque du Film, Paris)
b | Scene still

Other basic modules for the staging of power: Ground level alone is excluded. Every sort of topography is vertically structured. The scenes of power are either far above or far below. When the cinema tells of power, almost inevitably everything is at stake: it is a matter of ruin and salvation, rise and fall, life and death. Stories about power necessarily involve falling from a great height. This is literally thematized in HUDSUCKER PROXY (Joel Coen, 1994). The film has a running gag about how far the founder of the firm actually fell when he jumped to his death out of the office window: »44 floors; or 45 if you count the mezzanine floor.« With deliberate hubris, this film celebrates the eternal saga of rise and fall. But when the plot has reached its zenith it first wants to settle in and enjoy the big time. HUDSUCKER PROXY is as impertinent and megalomaniac as its hero. In a press release interview on the occasion of the German premiere, Dennis Gassner, the production designer stated: »We aimed for sheer size. When Norvill Barnes (Tim Robbins) enters the office of Sidney J. Mussburger (Paul Newman), the impression should be that he's strayed into Mussolini´s domain. The art deco conference table in the board room with its precious marquetry work is based on a photo from the 1950s. It was so long that it had to be delivered in five parts and assembled in the studio. We transformed a huge, empty room with a ninety metre long corridor into the mail room, which looks

as if it had been designed by Albert Speer. In HUDSUCKER PROXY, Dennis Gassner together with Joel and Ethan Coen also ironically catalogued various spaces of power from past films, ranging from the visual symbol of the anonymous open-plan office in Billy Wilder's THE APARTMENT (1959/60; production design: Alexandre Trauner), located somewhere in the middle of a skyscraper and the endless corridors in the basement reminiscent of Orson Welles' THE TRIAL (1962) to the leader aesthetics of METROPOLIS on the floors high above the city. Cutting across the vertical axis of the Hudsucker Building: »44 floors; or 45 if you count the mezzanine floor.« Orgies of central perspective – in extent and volume.

THE APARTMENT (1959/60)
a | Design: Alexandre Trauner (© Collection Madame J. Trauner, Tours)
b | Scene still (© Collection Madame J. Trauner, Tours)

THE TRIAL (1962)
c | Scene still

Black Box

An objectivising statement is expedient for spaces of power. The language of this statement includes intimidation, uniformity, heteronomy, control. While in civilian life these forces occur only in mixed manifestation, in prison they are to be found in unadulterated form. The architecture of prisons has a clear image in the cinema. With little deviation, the basic features of the »panopticon« are varied – the model of prison architecture developed as long ago as 1791 by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Cinema prisons always more or less resemble one another. A prison of a different sort, really a lightweight construction, one that is set up only temporarily and is easy to dismantle, is to be found in Oliver Hirschbiegel's film DAS EXPERIMENT (2000/01). An experimental facility in the basement of a German university: the potential for aggression in an artificial prison situation is to be sounded

out. But however simulated this arrangement might be, the subjects are to act as close to life as possible. What is untypical but nevertheless meaningful about the arrangement – for instance, long distances as an aggravation for both warders *and* prisoners – contributes greatly to making the developing dynamic credible, and to observers increasingly losing their safe distance as the experiment proceeds. The experimental prison designed by Uli Hanisch for Oliver Hirschbiegel's film is cool, objective, open – and brutally bright. But there is also a black box, a sound and light-proof mobile cell available for maximum punishment. Intensified disciplining in the form of a threatened reversal of the cool, objective, open, and bright. Claustrophobia and agoraphobia are registers on which spaces of power in the cinema always play.

DAS EXPERIMENT (2000/01)
a | Model, reconstruction: Petra Maria Wirth, Cologne
b | Scene still

INNER LIFE

Inner Life

by Nils Warnecke

Everyone has had the experience. You meet someone for the first time, gain an impression of the person and find him more or less agreeable. This reaction has so far been aroused by outward appearance, by the person's voice, posture, habitus, together with the way he is dressed, which can be an important first indication of social background. Another dimension is reached the first time we're invited into the person's home. This is the place where we can experience him directly in his surroundings. It is interesting to see where he lives. Is it a posh suburb or a loud inner-city neighbourhood? And what sort of building is it, old or modern? And how does his home look? How is it furnished, what colours and materials has he chosen? Does it look lived-in, is it tidy or chaotic? Do the home and its occupier harmonise? What books are there on the shelves, what pictures are hanging on the walls? How is the living space distributed? Is the kitchen a centre? Is there a desk in the place? Innumerable questions can be asked at first glance, under circumstances where the answer can be found. Even if you don't yet really know the person concerned.
If we now transfer this everyday experience to the dramaturgy of film, it is clear that, in creating the personal environment of a character, the production designer – as well as the actor and costume designer – can convey things to the public in an infinity of ways. Almost everything can be portrayed: social milieu, historical period, even

MON ONCLE (1956-58) | Scene still (© Les Films de Mon Oncle, Paris)

personal peculiarities, or the atmosphere intended to illustrate the emotional state of the character. A production designer has to ask himself all the above questions when he sets about designing the domestic context of a protagonist. And, with an eye on the screenplay and in consultation with the director, he has to settle them for himself. The dramaturgical function of a given private space can vary widely.

Sunny's Point of View

The Socialist-Realism frame of reference for Konrad Wolf's Defa film SOLO SUNNY (1978-80) is the East Berlin of the 1970s. In search of suitable original locations for the story of a young Berlin singer, hungry for life and the unconventional, designer Alfred Hirschmeier combed the workers' and artists' quarter Prenzlauer Berg, which was even then a legend. In real, everyday East German life, too, the morbid courtyard tristesse of turn-of-the-century tenements was a popular setting for creative lateral thinkers to live and work in. Sunny's (Renate Krößner) apartment mirrors the personal ambience of a highly self-absorbed, artistic personality. A sort of egocentricity that is not so much arrogant as determined and almost naïve. Apart from the typical improvised kitchen with shower cubicle and storage cupboard, there is only one other room. In the middle stands a wide bed on an oriental-patterned carpet opposite a dressing table with a large mirror. On the wall are various portrait photos of the young woman. This is Sunny's stage, here she mirrors herself – and here she can hide away. Quite different, although only a couple of buildings away in the same milieu, is the home of the man with whom she falls in love. Ralph (Alexander Lang), a philosophy graduate, also lives in a one-room flat with a kitchen – and shared toilet. But here there are no self-portraits, no

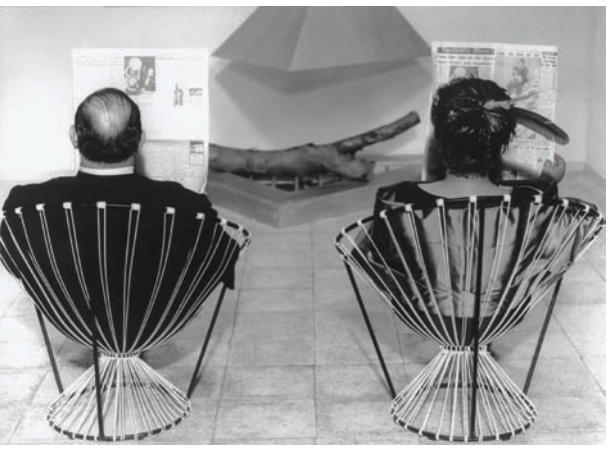
SOLO SUNNY (1978-80)
a | Scene still
b | Design: Alfred Hirschmeier

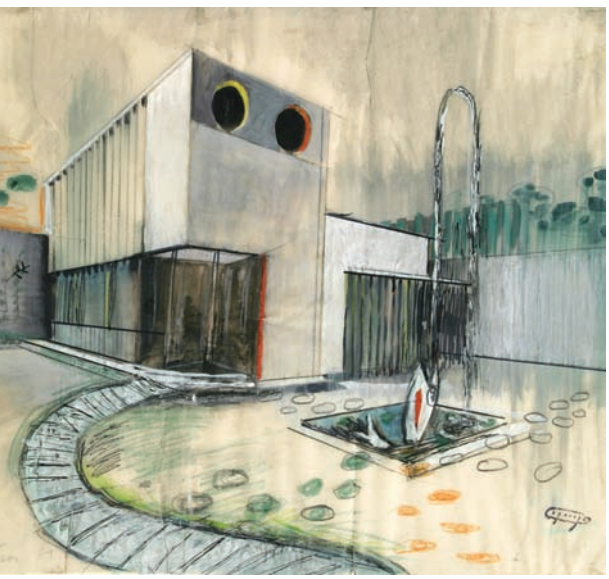
mirrors, no draped curtains. There are books everywhere, in free-standing bookcases, in roughly made racks, and piled up against the walls. A desk with a typewriter hints at the occupant's profession. The improvised bed is wedged against the wall. In a key scene after their first night together, Sunny is alone in these alien surroundings. She examines books and prints, is surprised to find that the substructure under the narrow mattress is made of an old door blade. How she does this and the fact that she starts daubing light blue paint on some of the inventory tells us just as much about her as about the man in whose apartment she is. For Hirschmeier and Wolf, private space is a real extension of the characters into filmic space. Like cameraman Eberhard Geick, they were familiar with this special East Berlin scene. The scenery and props tell us a lot, not only about milieu and zeitgeist, but also about Sunny and Ralph; their biographies, their present situation, about the impossibility of their love. They are revealing, and not only to us, the audience. They allow the two protagonists to get to know each other better: it is an exchange of information without words. The settings described also make it clear that the designer has to consider the perspective from which the story is to be told. In the case of SOLO SUNNY we see the philosopher's flat through Sunny's eyes. There may be a few too many books, but that is how it looks from her point of view.

SOLO SUNNY (1978-80)
a | Design: Alfred Hirschmeier
(© Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin)
b | Work still

Life and Design

In their masterwork MON ONCLE (1956-58), Jacques Tati and his artistic adviser Jacques Lagrange take a quite different approach to the private spaces of their protagonists. Although the given surroundings also say something about the individual, we learn far more about the characters through the way in which they interact with the





MON ONCLE (1956-58)
a | c | Scene stills (© Les Films de Mon Oncle, Paris)
b | Model based on plans by Jacques Lagrange
(© Ifa / 5b Réalisations, Paris)

environment. Tati is primarily concerned with juxtaposing two contrary milieus to allow a scathing critique of the modern age. Tati himself plays Monsieur Hulot as the representative of the old, socially intact, romantically transfigured Paris. He lives in a 19th century building. Extensions and superstructures give it character, lend it history. Up steep steps and winding staircases an almost labyrinthine route takes us to Hulot's modest attic apartment. In a short but significant scene, he sets one of his windows in such a way that the neighbour's bird gets a little sunlight, which it immediately rewards with happy warbling. Like Hulot himself, this environment is a little chaotic and wilful, but alive and full of charming eccentricity. The other pole is the Villa Arpel, the life-world of his sister (Adrienne Servantie) and her family in a hypermodern Paris suburb. The nouveau riche family subjugate the brand-new home and newly planted garden entirely to the dictates of contemporary taste. The water-spouting fish sculpture in the garden is turned on only when important visitors are expected; the entire ensemble of a modern, white Bauhaus cube, with its fully styled, cool interior is clearly only for representational purposes. Everything in this ambience imposes recurring, senseless rituals every day on its occupants; such as negotiating the meandering paving-stone route from the house to the garage or the smart, basket-like metal armchairs that force the user into uncomfortable, comic-grotesque sitting positions. Nothing takes account of human habits, needs, and activities. The often repeated battle cry of architect Frank Lloyd Wright »form follows function« is reversed: design determines life. And this is Tati's brilliant move. The daily routine imposed on the protagonists by the material

environment becomes an absurd ballet, bringing bitter tears of laughter to the eyes of the observer.

Interiors

At first glance, interior design in Woody Allen's films is discreet and casual. Most viewers will not suspect that, apart from the New York setting, places and design play any important part in Allen's loquacious, comic films. But the private environment of his New York neurotic is as important as the typical Woody Allen outfit of glasses and eternal brown corduroys. The rooms of these educated, white, Jewish-American middle classes reveal a great deal about their occupants. This has been the task for almost twenty years of production designer Santo Loquasto. HUSBANDS AND WIVES (1991/92) tells, in essence, the story of two New York married couples who are typical representatives of the Allen tribe. Nevertheless, their life worlds are completely different. The one pair (Judy Davis, Sydney Pollack) live in an expensive suburb, and the two suffer from the usual suburban neuroses. He is a successful businessman who daily commutes to New York. She is a »mentally hyperactive«, frustrated housewife, who sits on the historic monuments committee and keeps an expensive interior decorator. Everything in her house is styled to the tiniest detail. The sand-toned walls are almost bare, designer objects are posed in splendid isolation or positioned on sideboards, the blue-illuminated kitchen has an almost clinical elegance, and at first glance the sterile bedroom seems an unlikely venue for a fulfilled sexual life. Quite different, but no less typical, is the apartment of the other pair (Woody Allen and Mia Farrow), two intellectual urbanites with cultural occupations. Full of books and manuscripts, bathed in honey-coloured, warm light, and provided with a miscellany of tasteful furniture and decorative objects, this interior reflects not only the complicated but loveable psyche of its occupants but also the closeness of the eastern seaboard to Europe.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES (1991/92)
a b Scene stills

Opulence and Severity

Woody Allen's great European model is Ingmar Bergman whose last film FANNY OCH ALEXANDER (1981/82) gained an Oscar in 1983 in the category »art direction«. This was a great surprise for the then 36-year-old production designer Anna Asp. At a still relatively early stage in her career, working for Bergman on this epic, autobiographically influenced, historical subject was a great challenge. Bergman had very specific ideas about the milieu of a great theatre family in the Uppsala of the late 19th century, and just as strong notions about the personal environment of the individual protagonists. Asp reports that the bedroom of Helena Ekdahl (Gunn Wållgren) – a famous former stage actress, who is the emotional hub of the family – was to radiate sexuality, security, and warmth. It was to symbolise a uterus. Anna Asp achieved this effect with dark red ornateness, wine-red velvet, and dark furniture. The other rooms that Helena occupies and uses also breathe this opulence, showing the theatrical gesture of a great, ageing actress who – not a little vain – takes care of her appearance, but nonetheless gathers the beloved family around her with great warmth. Asp likes to work with colours, light, and structures. Before making the first designs for the environment of a character, she prepares what she calls a »bible«. She compiles a catch-all portfolio of materials, colours, and pictures that could fit the character. On the basis of these ingredients she then develops the concrete setting. Emilie and Oscar Ekdahl (Ewa Fröling, Allan Edwall), the parents of Fanny and Alexander (Pernilla Allwin, Bertil Guve), live together with Helena in the same house. The same spacious architecture, the same high-ceilinged, patrician salons – but the atmosphere in the private rooms of Emilie and Oscar is completely different. White, yellow, and light green are the colours of the

FANNY OCH ALEXANDER (1981/82)
a | b | Scene stills

then modern art nouveau. The theatre family is not only well-off but also liberal, open to new things, offering its children security and freedom to develop. In the second part of the film, the father has died and his widow Emilie takes refuge in the strong arms of the stern Bishop Vergérus (Jan Malmsjö). For the children this means losing their accustomed environment. Instead of being surrounded by generosity and love, they are now subjected to discipline and severity. Anna Asp considered carefully how she could visualise this breach, how she should design the environment of the bishop. An article on a castle gave her an idea. She looked at the building and knew that the house of the bishop had to resemble a prison. The rooms were decorated in barren, monastic white, the simple wooden furniture was reduced to the absolutely necessary. Black bars covered the windows, and through the milky panes, which cannot be seen through, a diffused, even light falls.

FANNY OCH ALEXANDER (1981/82)
a | Production design, model: Anna Asp (© Svenska Filminstitutet, Stockholm)
b | c | Scene stills

Extravagant and Unpretentious

Ang Lee's THE ICE STORM (1996/97) is also an historical film, although it deals with the more recent past, the 1970s, and plays in a suburb of New York. It, too, depends strongly on the dramatisation and emotional charge of the setting. Two families connected in friendship are the human focus

THE ICE STORM (1996/97)
a | b | c | Scene stills

of the film designed by Mark Friedberg. Lee and Friedberg – like the makers of the other films we have described – like to work with clichés and polarisation. This is apparent above all in the houses of the two families. One is surrounded by dense, evergreen coniferous forest, which give it the air of a refuge, a place where you can feel safe and secure although the high trees prevent an unobstructed view of it. The other home, a white Bauhaus cube with coldly arrogant window walls, strangely isolated and placed at some height in a leafless beech wood, is clearly visible. This is where the family of Janey Carver (Sigourney Weaver) lives. Like her house, she has cool beauty and extravagant aloofness. Janey is obviously bored by suburban life and on the lookout for sexual adventure. She finds it – at least for a time – with Ben Hood (Kevin Kline), who lives in the other house with his family. Ben's wife Elena (Joan Allen) – unpretentious, shy, and fragile, but warmer than Janey – makes an unassuming impression like her house. The furnishings are similarly unspectacular, a slowly evolving, motley collection from different phases of life – an organic and living conjunction of different colours and materials. The house of the Carvers, in contrast, is white and grey both inside and out and furnished sparingly and fashionably throughout in contemporary style. The production design vividly evokes Janey's inner state and her relations with her husband Jim (James Sheridan) in a brief but decisive scene. Janey is lying reading in the bedroom, lying on the stylish conjugal waterbed. Jim comes into the room and sits down on the edge of the bed. This sets off a violent tremor, putting Janey off balance and almost precipitating her onto the floor.

The story of the two families culminates in an ice storm which (a pertinent symbol) freezes everything. While the conflicts between the adults come to a head at a party, ending with the swap of partners, the elder Carver son dies tragically in the storm.

The catharsis triggered by this natural disaster is prefigured in the design of the two so different houses. If the association of ice and cold is obvious for the white Bauhaus cube, cool blue, green, or turquoise tones are to be found in almost all of the rooms in Ben and Elena's house, as well. As a sort of metaphor running throughout the film, the camera repeatedly shows ice being crunched out of an ice cube mould.

CAUGHT IN THE LABYRINTH

Caught in the Labyrinth

by Kristina Jaspers

Film labyrinths appear primarily to be psychological spaces. Labyrinths are perplexing and enigmatic. They fascinate and frighten. People can get lost in them, lose their way – and their mind. The labyrinth is both a metaphor and an architectural articulation. The labyrinthine space reveals itself subjectively – it is staged as an existential projection surface: in interaction between structures and camera, montage, and direction – and not least of all the art of acting. The perspective of the actor is therefore particularly important, whether he strolls like a sleepwalker, almost oblivious to his surroundings through spacious halls and corridors – as in Alain Resnais' L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD (1960/61) – or flees panic-stricken through the narrow passages of a space ship – as in Ridley Scott's ALIEN (1978/79).

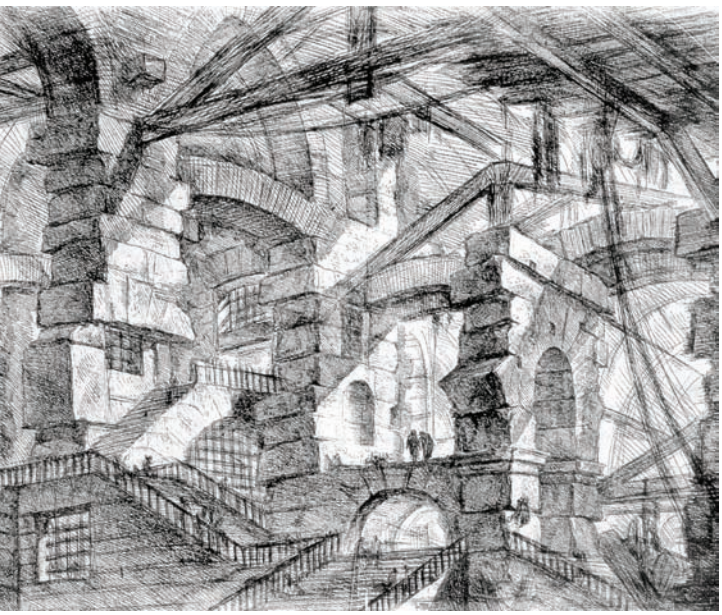
The labyrinth as a metaphor for complications goes back to Plato. According to the myth, Daedalus constructed the first labyrinth, which served to house the Minotaur. The visual motif goes back to the second or third millennium before Christ; first examples of rock carvings in labyrinth form were found on Crete. The classical labyrinth is a closed form with an entrance and an exit as well as a clearly defined centre. The path is linear, there are no junctions, and thus no choices. Mazes, in contrast, as we know them, especially in the form of Baroque park elements, branch

THE SHINING (1978-80) | Scene still

repeatedly and have many dead-ends. Colloquially, mazes and labyrinths are both called labyrinths, and this is how the term is used here.

Thinking and Going Astray

The artistically intertwining, geometrically constructed meanders of a labyrinth can be understood as a symbol of logical thinking and universal, encyclopaedic knowledge. In his novel »The Name of the Rose« (1980), the author and linguist Umberto Eco designed the heart of a monastery, the library, in the form of a labyrinth. This is where a reputedly lost book is kept. Distorting mirrors, toxic vapours, and refined traps are deployed to ward off possible intruders and protect the arcane knowledge; in fact these devices spur the ambition of two monks who are investigating several murders. In his postscript to the novel, Eco describes the labyrinth as an abstract model of criminological suspicion.



a | Etching »The Gothic Vault«
Giovanni Battista Piranesi, ca. 1745

THE NAME OF THE ROSE (1985/86)
b | Dante Ferretti in the set of the library

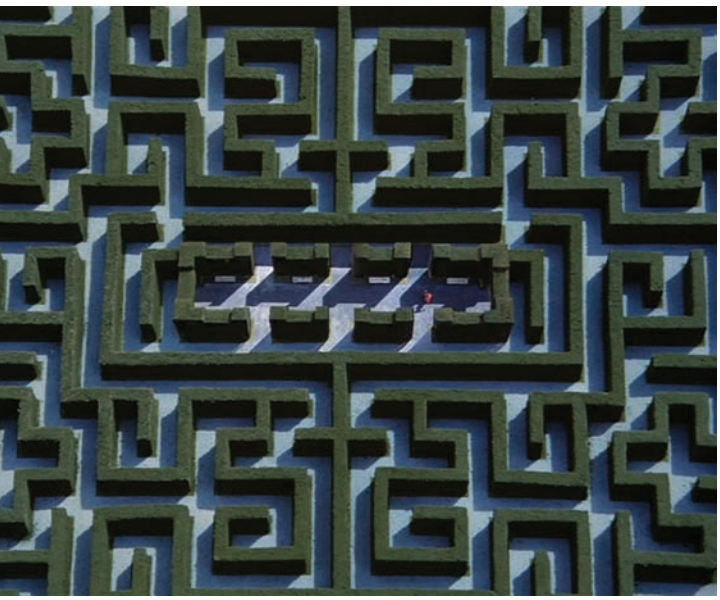
With his labyrinthine library, Eco pays homage to the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. In the story »The Library of Babel,« Borges, once an employee and later director of the Biblioteca Nacional in Buenos Aires, describes the spatial design for an infinite labyrinth: »The universe (which others call the library) is composed of an unlimited and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries with wide ventilation shafts in the centre surrounded by very low railings. From each hexagon one can see the lower and upper floors; without end. The arrangement of the galleries is immutably the same.« In Eco's novel, four octagonal towers abut on the square central structure. The historical model is the Castel del Monte in Apulia, built in the mid-13th century.

In contrast to Borges, Eco opts for a single-storey labyrinth; his model is a reconstructed floor ornament from Reims Cathedral.
For the film (1985/86), director Jean-Jacques Annaud excluded a ground-level labyrinth for several reasons: »If the labyrinth's in a tower, why is it low? ... The psychological impact of the tower is very much greater if you visualise that it is completely taken up by a labyrinth. ... In a flat labyrinth it is very difficult to film. Everything is very narrow, everywhere there are walls. This greatly restricts the possibilities of perspective.« Production designer Dante Ferretti accordingly designed a multi-storey labyrinth with many stairways and galleries. Over 3000 drawings are said to have been made for the entire film, which were then checked for plausibility by French historians. However, historically incorrect but artistically particularly striking designs apparently proved convincing precisely in the plans for the library. The stairways freely suspended between walls that are to be seen in the film did not exist in the Middle Ages. They become architectural possible only in the 18th century. This is also the period when the Italian Piranesi produced the etchings on which Ferretti's designs are based. Giovanni Battista Piranesi's series »Carceri d'Invenzione« – Imaginary Prisons – was first published in about 1745. It is said that his gloomy visions were created during an attack of fever. Knowledge and spirituality, or madness and delirium? In Piranesi's labyrinthine dungeons, oblique perspectives, false proportions, and the transposition of space serve rather to depict an infinite, godless world. His spatially illogical constructions seem a nightmarish symbol of the human mind; in these prints logic and insanity go hand in hand. Dante Ferretti has steep wooden stairs rising and descending from the stone central tower. The camera uses the two-and-a-half storeys for vertiginous perspectives, revealing only a small section of the entire tower structure at any one time. The monastery library thus remains baffling and a mirror of universal, incomprehensible knowledge.

THE NAME OF THE ROSE (1985/86)
a | Model, reconstruction: Gerald Narr
b | Work still (© Mario Tursi, Rome)

Ariadne's Thread

Every labyrinth can be read like a floor plan; a shift in perspective is inscribed in its very form. Seen from above, the network of ways is legible. Such a view is to be found in Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING (1978-80): Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) stands in the hotel lobby before a miniature model of a garden labyrinth. The picture dissolves to the actual maze, where we see Jack's wife (Shelly Duvall) and his son (Danny Lloyd) walking around in a perplexing confusion of pine hedges. The production designer Roy Walker had about a quarter of the maze built on the studio back lot; the overall view was obtained by a trick of montage. From a bird's eye view mother and child appear to be hopelessly lost.



THE SHINING (1978-80)
a | Stanley Kubrick on the set
(© Stanley Kubrick Estate / Stanley Kubrick Exhibition)
b | Scene still

The motif of the labyrinth, the basic visual idea of the film, is varied in a number of ways by Kubrick and Walker. The remote, vacant hotel in the mountains makes a bewildering impression with the arrangement of its innumerable rooms. When Jack's son rides through the long corridors of the Overlook Hotel, the geometrical pattern of the carpeting intensifies the impression that the boy is lost in a labyrinth. In these explorations along the hotel corridors, camera and production design work together like old accomplices: the steadicam glides smoothly round corners, over carpeting and parquet flooring. The audience is denied any spatial orientation. For weeks Roy Walker travelled around the USA photographing hotels. He then went through the material with Stanley Kubrick, composing the hotel we see in the film from various models. The establishing shot shows the Timberline Lodge Hotel in Mount Hood, Oregon. Among the models for interiors was the Ahwhanee Hotel in the Yosemite Valley.

The final sequence of the film once again

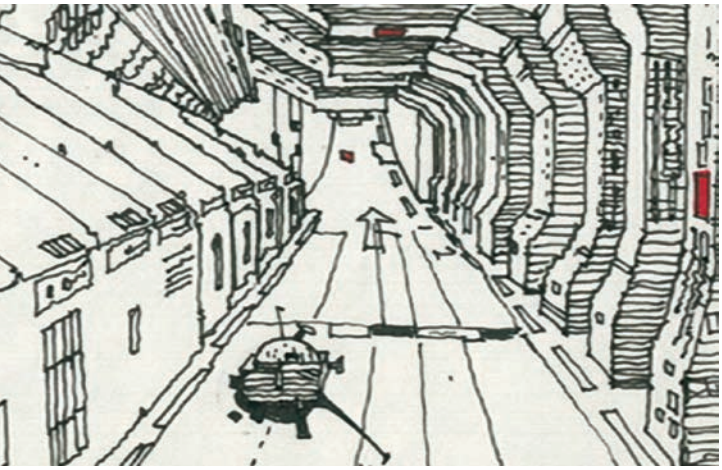
takes place in the hedge labyrinth, which is snowed under. The boy is fleeing from his now insane father. The maze becomes the manifest expression of a schizophrenic mind. In Stephen King's novel, on which Kubrick's film is based, there is no labyrinth. Kubrick added it as a metaphor. To find a way out of the maze, the boy follows his own footsteps in the snow. This recalls the myth of Theseus, who escapes from the labyrinth of the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne's thread. In his essay on »Monster in the maze. The Architecture of The Shining« (2004), the Finnish architect and author Juhani Pallasmaa compares Jack Torrance in his icy death with Picasso's etchings of the Minotaur. The maze becomes a deadly prison.

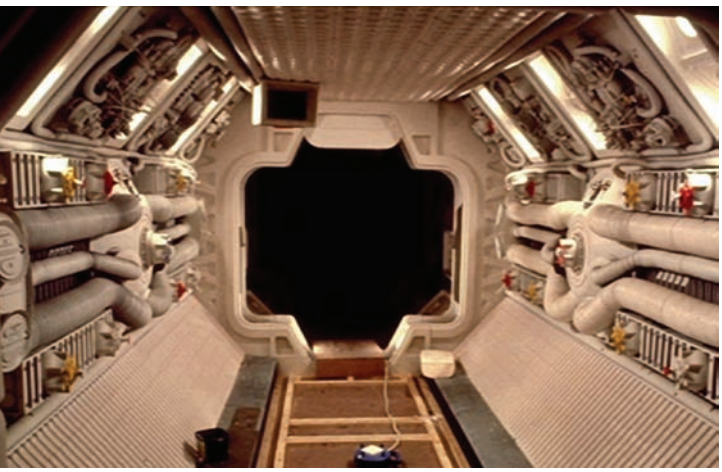
The Foreign Body

Ridley Scott's ALIEN plays in 2122: a space transporter is following an unidentified signal to an unknown planet. There the crew comes across alien life. Step by step the alien kills the entire crew, only Commander Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) manages to flee earthwards in a space glider. In this film, too, the labyrinth is a closed system from which there initially seems to be no way out.

The first sketches for the production design – very like a storyboard – were made by the director. In designing the space ship, Scott had in mind the claustrophobic confinement of a submarine. In the following months, a large number of designers worked to create the characteristic look of the film. People were engaged for the art department who had previously worked on DARK STAR (John Carpenter, 1973-75) and STAR WARS (George

THE SHINING (1978-80)
a | b | Location photos »Ahwahnee Hotel«: Roy Walker
(© Stanley Kubrick Estate / Stanley Kubrick Exhibition)
c | d | Scene stills



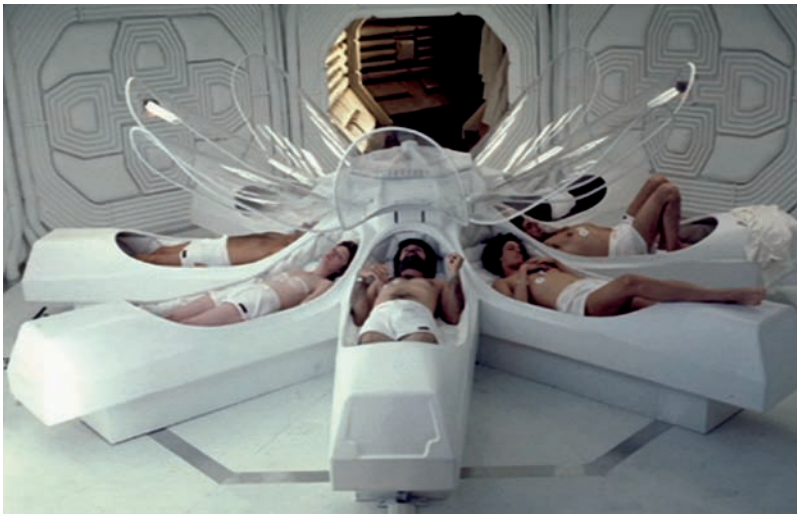


ALIEN (1978/79)
a | Design: Ridley Scott
b | Work still
c | Studio set, production design: Ridley Scott

Lucas, 1976/77). Finally, Michael Seymour was responsible for building the space ship. With mirrors he optically lengthened the passageways. The dolly shots through seemingly endless ducts and over several decks develop a tremendous impulsion. The space ship Nostromo was built in the studio as a multi-storey set. Seymour was inspired by Egyptian reliefs for the wall cladding of the main deck, recalling the cultic origins of the labyrinth. If one follows through with the notion of Egyptian motifs, the space ship can be seen as a gigantic burial chamber. The heart of the labyrinthine structure is the »hypersleep room« where, at the start of the film, the crew's sleeping berths open like a seven-petalled flower. Then the camera explores Deck A with its white surfaces bathed in unearthly light. The process of awaking is staged like a resurrection.

Together with his team, Michael Seymour was nominated for an Oscar in the category »art direction.« He did not receive the coveted trophy, but an Oscar was awarded to the Swiss graphic artist H. R. Giger for »visual effects«. Giger had a decisive influence on the aesthetics of the film, designing not only the alien figure but also the complete alien space ship. The passage into the brooding chamber with the soft, pulsing alien eggs is like the way down into an uterus. The organic forms, inspired by surrealism and art nouveau, give the impression of a mythological culture thousands of years old. At the same time, the design plays with sexual connotations. The »space jockey« inside the brooding chamber is phallic in form. The conquest of the alien space ship

is shown as an act of bodily possession, like penetrating convolutions of the brain or blood and nerve vessels. In a 1979 article in »Die Zeit,« the film critic Helmut W. Banz wrote: »This excursion through the universe is in essence a Freudian journey into the repressed: frightening, disturbing, and pleasurable.« The space appears as the materialisation of unconscious fears and desires.

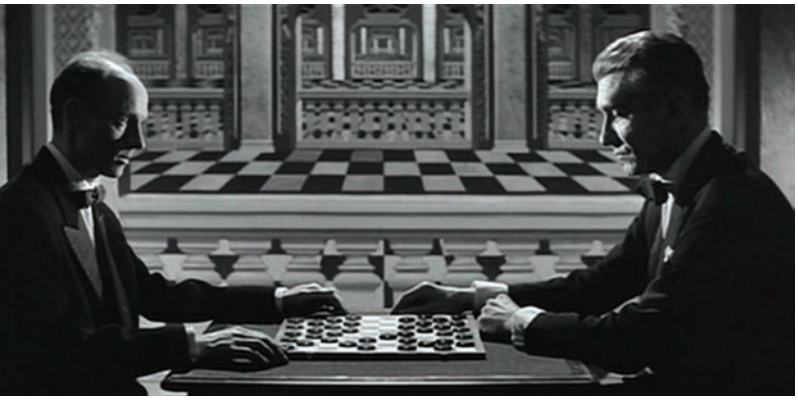


ALIEN (1978/79)
a | Scene still
b | Work still

In Dream through the Labyrinth of Meanings

»Once again I walked, alone, along the same corridors – through the same lost halls, the same colonnades, the same windowless galleries, I went through the same portals, choosing my way as if by chance in this labyrinth of indistinguishable passages.« The camera moves along richly ornamented walls, past marquetry and frescoes, through open doors. A man's voice reports off-screen of his endless walks through the Baroque corridors and salons of a hotel, past marble, carving, columns. A woman's voice joins in, and a dialogue develops. The man insists that they had known each other a year before in Marienbad. She denies it. He wants to flee with her, she delays making a decision.

The screenplay for L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD was written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, one of the founders of the nouveau roman. In a surrealist manner, he narrates associatively, intertwining different perspectives and time levels. In his first screenplay, Robbe-Grillet tries to transfer the nouveau roman approach to the film. He meticulously determines every camera movement, the light, the scenery, and the montage. With few exceptions, director Alain Resnais follows this script. Jacques Saulnier was responsible for the setting. It was the first time he had worked with Resnais – over ten joint projects were to follow. Most of the filming was done in the Bavarian palaces



L' ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD (1960/61)
a | c | Scene stills
b | d | Design: Jacques Saulnier (© Bibliothèque du Film, Paris)

Schloss Nymphenburg and Schloss Schleißheim. The grand halls and galleries with their elegant, mannerist ornamentation intensify the impression of a parable. Other sequences were shot in a Paris studio. In his designs on cardboard and wood, Saulnier accentuates the stucco work in silver and gold. In the montage, the black and white images succeed almost without transition. Only in the opulence of the wall and ceiling reliefs are the various original settings like the hall of mirrors in the Amalienburg to be recognised. The camera focuses repeatedly on polished surfaces and mirrors. They serve firstly as decorative elements, and give particular depth to the corridors. However, the mirror in the mirror shows another reality: the world of dreams, memories, the repressed, the unconscious. In the corridors hang prints of the gardens and paintings of the rooms. The set of the theatre production repeats the symmetry of the garden design. The visual doubling and mirror images lend spaces a sense of fathomlessness, multidimensionality, strengthening the impression that past, present, and future are merged – not a sequence but labyrinthine simultaneity. The film constitute a world of its own. It shows an ossified

society, paralysed in its history and meaningless conventions. Dialogues and film images repeat themselves over and over again with slight variations. The structure of filmic narration and the labyrinthine space are seamlessly interlinked. As Robbe-Grillet writes in his screenplay, it is a matter of »a reality which the hero creates through his own vision, through his own words.«


LOST IN TRANSITION

Lost in Transition

by Peter Mänz

We encounter transit spaces primarily during one of modern humanity's fundamental experiences: movement. Moving from one place to another can mean covering a short distance or travelling around the world, in film even a SPACE ODYSSEY (Stanley Kubrick, 1965–68). To get from A to B, people in the 20th and 21st centuries generally enter the public sphere voluntarily but sometimes under constraint. Between the free movement of the stroller or holidaymaker and the constrained passage of a refugee or prisoner, there can be situations in which people transit public spaces in the pursuit of their duties, for instance while on business. In film, which focuses on strong emotions and dramatic complications, it more often happens in such situations than in the everyday lives of the audience.

Transparency and Modernity

A classical example of a filmic transit situation is Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's silent film SUNRISE. A SONG OF TWO HUMANS (1926/27), in which a boating excursion from a village by a married couple (Janet Gaynor, George O'Brian) ends with the woman fleeing aboard a tramcar on the opposite shore of the lake. The woman feels threatened by her husband, runs away when they reach land, clambering aboard a tramcar that suddenly appears in the woodland idyll. The husband, incited to murder his wife

THE TERMINAL (2003/04) | Scene still

SUNRISE (1926/27)
a | b | Scene stills

by his mistress from the city (Margaret Livingston), pursues his wife onto the vehicle.

This could be a typical scene in a thriller: pursuer and pursued in one vehicle, preferably a subway, scrambling from carriage to carriage. When used in such a classical genre, transit spaces usually have the function of intensifying the thrill generated by the pursuit of the victim by the perpetrator. They stress that the situation is momentarily a closed world, that there is no way out. The basic situation of the journey in Murnau's film SUNRISE is different. The viewer knows that the husband is serious with his repeated insert-title plea »Don't be afraid of me«. There is only the one car, no other passengers, only the conductor. There is the wife's despair and the husband's remorse, no hopelessness or inescapability but sunlight views of the passing landscape, which first show a lake, shifting to images of suburban development with more and more people and traffic. With the journey into a city a metamorphosis begins – a fresh start for the couple. The constellation of the two protagonists develops from a coercive situation to one of reconciliation and freedom, a transformation given expression by the transparency of the glass architecture. A key scene of the film, shortly after the arrival of the couple in the city, is set in a café with a vertically structured glass façade giving a view of passers-by in the street. In his book »Filmarchitektur« (1996) the design historian Dietrich Neumann points to the link between the transparency and modernity of this set and the basic situation of the couple – the »manifest guilt of the man and the fragility of the newly-won trust«, describing it as a »timeless metaphor for the force of production design«.

Forlornness and Apotheosis

Situations of movement, travel, consumption, waiting: streets, arcades, businesses, department stores, hotels, terminals, lobbies, public transport, trains, cars, aircraft. In constructing these spaces – spatial constellations or means of transport – robust, durable materials are used: asphalt, stone slabs, metals and metal alloys, plastics, glass. The architecture of transit spaces is functional, and this is supported by the mostly symmetrical arrangement of artificial lighting. Transit spaces as filmic settings are difficult to photograph in real locations because shooting attracts the attention of passers-by and interferes with the normal functioning of the locale. In 1926 Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau had the city for SUNRISE built by the production designer Rochus Gliese, who had come with him to Hollywood from Germany: a set which was highly praised by the contemporary press.

Two years later, a similarly gigantic city set was built in a studio near Berlin to tell the »boy meets girl« story in the version »respectable gentleman seduced by femme fatale«. Two designs made during the production process of the Ufa film ASPHALT (Joe May, 1928/29) show different approaches to staging a filmic transit space. A pencil drawing stressing the central perspective by Robert Herlth, who was originally to have designed the film, shows an apparently endless city street with dense traffic. The regularly spaced lighting and narrowing perspective lend the nocturnal street the aspect of a tunnel. Buildings and pedestrians are suggested by expressive symbolic strokes. The design shows a »lively (outdoor) space« in which the city atmosphere, in the artistic tradition of German Expressionism, also conveys forlornness.

Quite different is the scenography by Erich Kettelhut, who finally undertook the production design of ASPHALT. Overall, the more naturalistic picture shows recog-

ASPHALT (1928/29)
a | Design: Robert Herlth
b | Design: Erich Kettelhut (© Bibliothèque du Film, Paris)

nisable elements of contemporary Berlin: the city sparkles, neon signs are mirrored in the asphalt. This lively (outdoor) space is an apotheosis of the city, there are atmospheric echoes of the nocturnal city in SUNRISE and the night shots in Walther Ruttman's BERLIN. DIE SINFONIE DER GROSSSTADT (1926/27). The art director took the highly naturalistic concept to its extreme by inviting Berlin firms to decorate and design the show-windows and neon advertising in the city street. In his memoirs from the 1960s, he recalls: »The street could have been three times as long as the planned 230 metres to accommodate all the firms that applied«. The street was filmed with an extremely flexible camera on a mobile crane. But the gigantic set was built not only because it was difficult to find a Berlin street where it was possible »to shoot in heavy traffic day and night and build in all the prerequisites demanded by the script«, as Kettelhut remembers. The set also served to demonstrate the power of the Ufa Group. And the apotheosis of the city, reflected in Rudi Feld's theatre decoration for the premiere, also relates to the film's hopeful end: the femme fatale and jewel thief (Betty Amann) is arrested and send to prison, but the upright Berlin police constable (Gustav Fröhlich) will wait for her to come back.

ASPHALT (1928/29)
a | Painting, oil on canvas: Rudi Feld

Restiveness and Alienation

The option of having a transit space built in the studio was not considered by director François Truffaut. His film LA PEAU DOUCE lists no designer: Truffaut is both auteur and his own production designer. The film is about an affair between a literary scholar (Jean Desailly) and a stewardess (Françoise Dorléac), whom he meets on a lecture tour to Lisbon. It ends in tragedy. When his lover leaves him, he decides to return to his wife and family. But his wife (Nelly Benedetti) shoots him dead in a restaurant. The story is, as it were, a tragic reversal of the constellation in SUNRISE. In an interview François Truffaut said that his aim in LA PEAU DOUCE had been »to make a film that was as cool and clinical as a Simenon novel«, and this coolness is also conveyed by the transit spaces of the journey to Lis-

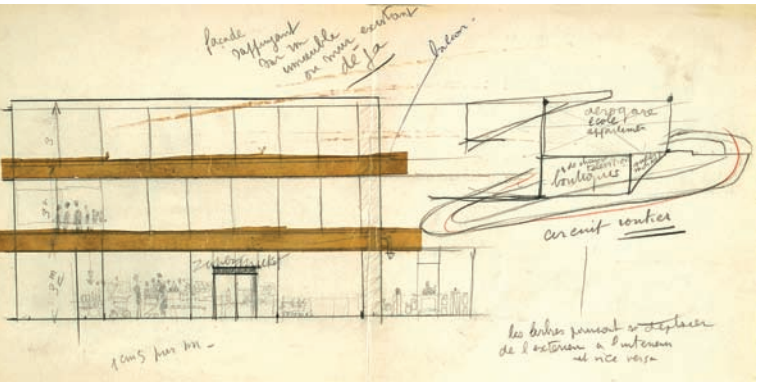
bon. The scholar meets the stewardess, who has already aroused his interest in the aircraft, in the hotel lift again. A long shot/reaction-shot sequence shows this meeting in the flickering lighting of the moving elevator, shows the man looking at the blinking floor indicator and at the brass tag with the young woman's room number. Clinical coolness is conveyed by details of properties and hotel corridors. Truffaut captured this atmosphere on location, the lift scene being shot in a factory building, the corridor sequences in a Paris hotel, and the scenes in the scholar's home in Truffaut's private apartment.

LA PEAU DOUCE (1963)
a | b | Scene stills

The film begins with a hectic drive to the Airport Paris-Orly, which takes the protagonist through a road tunnel – a filmic metaphor for a sense of forlornness. With the evenly lighted movement towards apparent infinity, this journey recalls Robert Herlth's street design for ASPHALT. Orly Airport was opened in 1961, and in the France of the 1960s it was seen as a symbol of the modern, technicized world, with its combination of large-surface glass façades, stainless steel, and marble. Several scenes in the film are set in the highly polished, seemingly endless corridors. In one scene the protagonist follows his mistress to Orly, writes her a telegram in one of the corridors, which he throws away when he meets her before her flight departs. In contrast to SUNRISE, the transparent, modern architecture of the building raises an invisible barrier between the characters, manifesting their inability to communicate. François Truffaut was fascinated by the atmosphere of the airport; he compiled a ten-minute short from unused sequences of LA PEAU DOUCE, giving it the title LES VOIX D'ORLY.

Reflections and Functionality

Three-and-a-half years after LA PEAU DOUCE, a film was premiered in Paris about the alienation of the individual in modern society, and which begins with an airport



PLAYTIME (1964-67)
a | Design: Jacques Lagrange (© Ifa / Hyacinthe Moreau Lalande, Paris)
b | c | Scene stills (© Les Films de Mon Oncle, Paris)

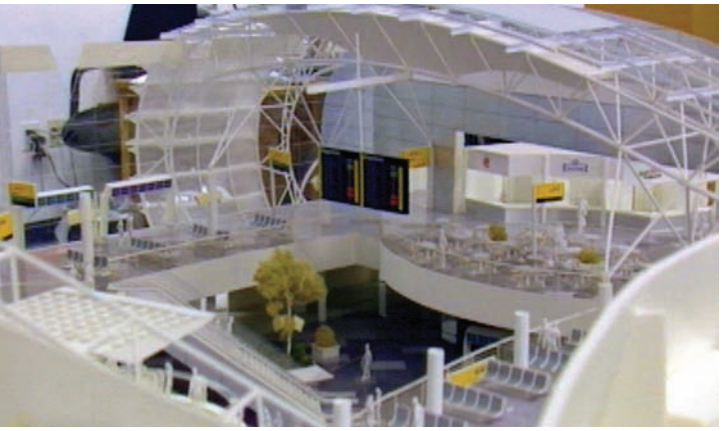
scene inspired by the modern architecture of Orly: Jacques Tati's PLAYTIME (1964-67). Tati, with his partner Jacques Lagrange, was also responsible for script and production design. But he did not look for his settings on location. He had outside settings and interiors built in perfect adaptation to the complex choreography of the scenes. Whereas Truffaut sought to convey restiveness and alienation through frequent change of angle, Tati's 70-mm colour film is characterised by extended and long shots combined with intricate choreography. The first sequence shows a corridor and waiting area whose walls, as in the entire building, are clad with stainless steel. Tati's designer Eugène Roman reports that he photographed the stainless steel cladding at Orly together with the director, and that these pictures were enlarged and stuck on the backdrops – not least of all because the blow-ups authentically reproduced the reflections in the metal cladding. On the left in the corridor sits a stolid-looking couple, dressed in the monochrome, uniform grey typical of the film. In the background, three stewardesses are standing before a window wall. The clinical atmosphere of the corridor is underlined by the arrival of cleaning and service staff who would be at home in a hospital. The production design is adapted in the smallest detail to the numerous,

parallel lines of action and the red herrings and gags of the film. For his critique of modern life and architecture, Jacques Tati had an office city built on the outskirts of Paris, »Tativille«, later to become reality in the office blocks of La Défense. »Tativille« had sets with tower blocks in perspective that could be shifted on castors and whose glass façades reflected the tourist attractions of »old« Paris only sporadically. Exteriors and interiors were not only transitory in nature. The glass office tower was also presented as a power space or labyrinth, the latter, for instance, when Monsieur Hulot (Jacques Tati) is looking for his business partner and loses his way in the maze of offices, endless passages, and reflecting façades. In the first part of the film the actors move in straight lines or at right angles, while in the second, anarchical part – for example in the chaotic, boozy restaurant »Royal Garden« – they tend to move in circles. PLAYTIME took three years to film. »Tativille« required 50,000 cubic metres of concrete, 3,200 square metres of building timber, and 1,200 square metres of glass, yet again one of the »biggest sets in the world«, built for a director who, according to a contemporary critic, proved to be »a better strategist than DeMille and a better choreographer than Busby Berkeley«.

PLAYTIME (1964-67)
a | b | Scene stills (© Les Films de Mon Oncle, Paris)

Alienness and Homelessness

Airport terminals can symbolise forlornness as in Truffaut's LA PEAU DOUCE or coolness and absurd functionality as in Tati's PLAYTIME. The terminal in Steven Spielberg's eponymous film also stands for these aspects, but it seeks to overwhelm and fascinate like the night-time city in Murnau's SUNRISE or the Berlin street in Joe May's ASPHALT. The plot is based on the story of the Iranian refuge Merhan Karimi Nasseri,



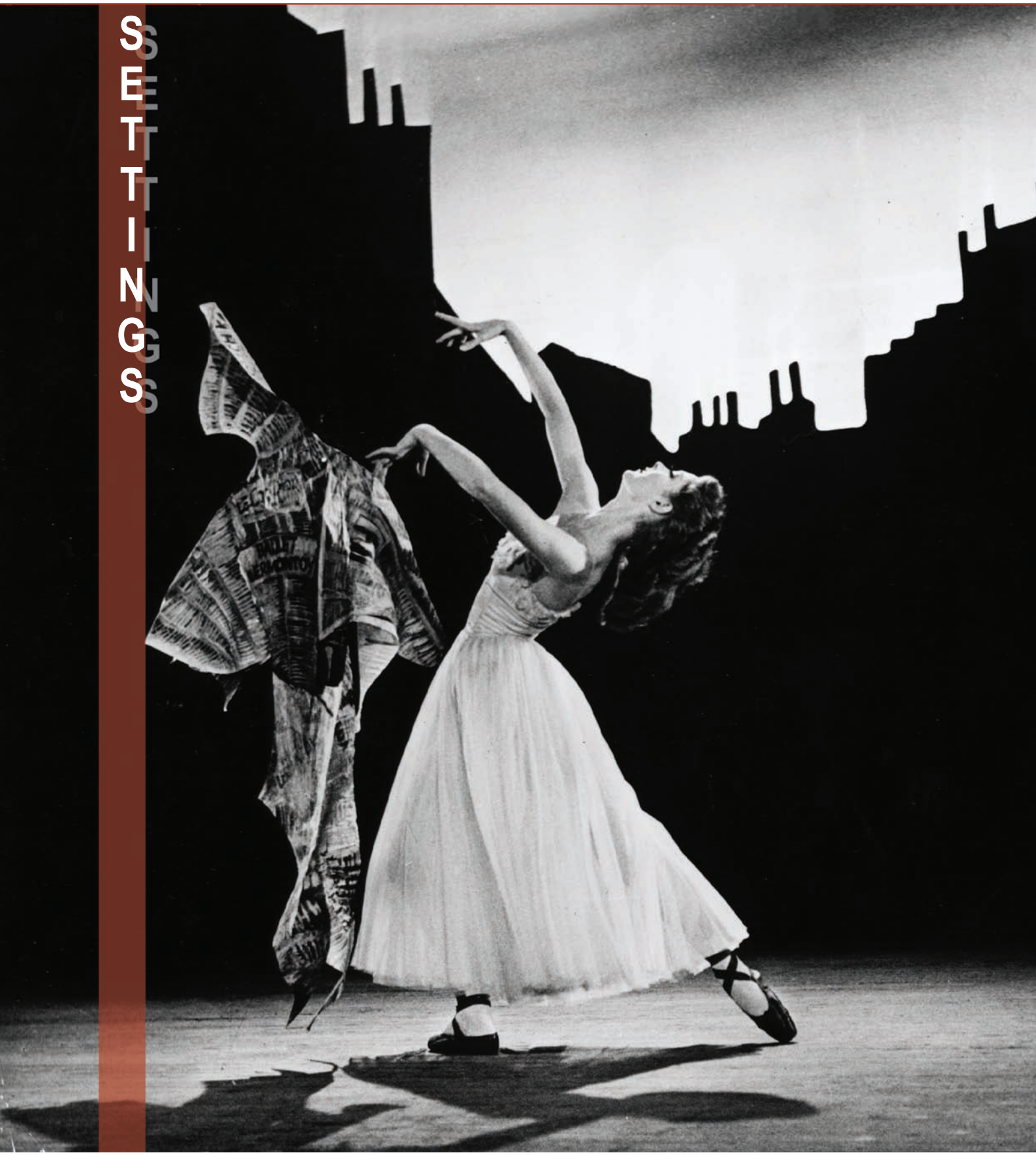
THE TERMINAL (2003/04)
a | Model
b | c | Computer simulation: Alex McDowell (© Alex McDowell, London)

alias Sir Alfred, whom bureaucratic complications have condemned to live without a passport in Terminal 1 of the Paris airport Charles de Gaulle Roissy since 1988. There have been several documentaries made about Nasseri, as well as a 1993 Franco-Spanish comedy entitled TOMBES DU CIEL/EN TRANSITO. In 2003, Steven Spielberg's firm DreamWorks took up the subject and commissioned production designer Alex McDowell to design a full-sized, functioning terminal. In Palmdale, California, a 120-metre-long, 82-metre-wide, and 18-metre-high building was erected in a hangar, with escalators and elevators and several thousand square metres of floor area paved with polished granite imported from China. Like Erich Kettelhut in ASPHALT, Alex McDowell sought the cooperation of outside firms in designing and furnishing the thirty-five stores and restaurants integrated in the set. To some extent these firms even lent their own staff. Also as in ASPHALT, the transitory structures were designed for an extremely mobile camera. On the basis of a true-to-scale model, Spielberg was able to check certain angles beforehand with a small periscope camera. Although the story is set in New York, Kay Hoffmann in »film-dienst« claims that McDowell produced »a mixture of American and European airports so that as many people as possible could feel at home there«. The uniformity of the modern world criticised by Jacques Tati in PLAYTIME becomes an end in itself in the production design of THE TERMINAL.

The answer to the question how filmic transit situations can best be realised depends on the script, the ideas of the director and the production designer. Sofia Coppola's LOST IN TRANSLATION (2003/04) is a film whose dramaturgy and visual design suggest

that the title alludes to the homelessness of modern humanity, who experience transit no longer as a temporary situation but as a state, and who consequently lose themselves in it: lost in transition. In Coppola's film, as with Truffaut, the characters converse without communicating, in the hotel forlornness sets in. As with Tati, the technicized world turns against human beings. And as in Murnau, one is overwhelmed by the bizarre aesthetics of the city's nocturnal sea of lights. The images were captured on location in Tokyo.

SETTINGS



Settings

by Gerhard Midding

One of Alain Resnais' earliest film memories goes back to the Warner Bros. musical 42nd STREET (Lloyd Bacon, 1933). He was enthralled by the story of how the impresario (Warner Baxter) mounts a Broadway revue with a troop of intrepid, ambitious beginners. The theatre was young Alain's second passion, which explains why Busby Berkeley's spacious, monumental choreography in the final sequence, the premiere of the musical, somewhat irritated him: »What we get to see could never be done on the stage!« The prime motive for attention to the other form of expression is to develop new scenic imagination in one's own medium. Particularly in periods when the »director's theatre« is adapting more and more screen material for the stage – whether for lack of ideas, through fascination, or in retribution for the ease with which the cinema has taken over stage material from the very outset – it becomes clear what a home advantage the seventh art enjoys. This is true both for the grand scale of the totality and for the emphasis of the close-up. Let alone cutting: we are long since accustomed to being drawn into the action by shot/reaction shot sequences or dolly shots. Perhaps the cinema's rapid progress in its early years explains the demands the public have made on its Mélièsian aspect. From the moment the camera became mobile there was great impatience when film art lingered in the old scenery. Even before the 1920s, stage-like sets seemed a relict, a deficit. However,

THE RED SHOES (1947/48) | Scene still

the cinema has never quite lost touch with its indispensable sources. Whenever inspiration wanes it can fall back on this source. The theatre has inspired filmmakers of wide ranging temperament: Max Ophüls saw in it a moral of melodramatic representation, Sidney Lumet is interested in psychological dramas unfolding in a restricted space, and the Portuguese doyen Manoel de Oliveira considered the theatre to be the synthesis of all arts – and hence the ideal imitation of life.

DER BLAUE ENGEL (1929/30)
a | Design: Otto Hunte

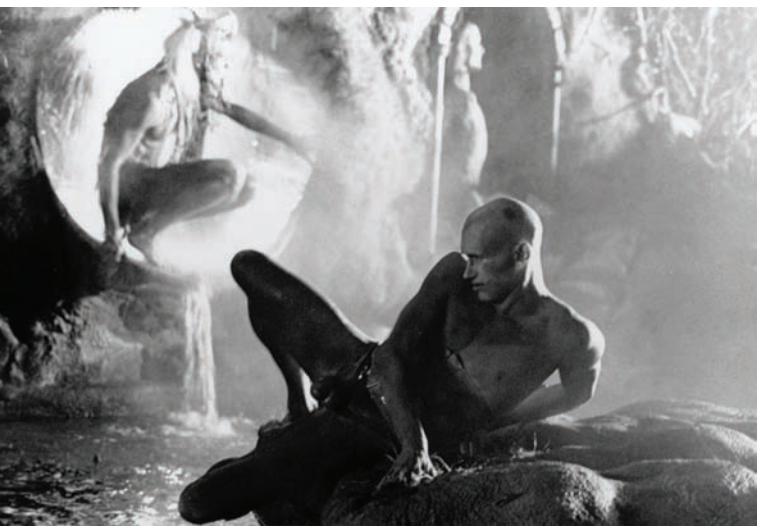
CABARET (1971/72)
b | Design: Jürgen Kiebach
c | Scene still

The Curtain Rises on the Street

For art directors, kinship with the stage set is a treacherous challenge, a terrain of affinity and limit setting. In CABARET (Bob Fosse, 1971/72) the risk of going astray between levels is still slight. The stage designed by Rolf Zehetbauer is defined as the setting, the scene of the action, not as the point of departure for an overarching scenic concept of theatrality. The cabaret stage of the Kit Kat Club is small and narrow but surprisingly variable: with every number it seems to re-invent itself as ambient (the curtain always playing a central role) and is imbued with a different atmosphere. But the stage is not a hermetically sealed-off counter-world. There is a repeated urge to expand the framework of the theatrical by extending the presence of figures as a shadow play when they leave the club. The seemingly well demarcated sphere relates closely to reality beyond the footlights: as a satirical, distorting mirror of what is happening on the streets of Berlin shortly before the Nazis seized power. The camerawork takes up this attitude of reflection, repeatedly seeking out window panes and mirrors that contort faces and scenery. Whereas in CABARET the blurring of boundaries was still gentle, in THE RED

SHOES (1947/48) it was much more resolute. Director Michael Powell and screenwriter Emeric Pressburger are fascinated by all the forces that only film can set free. Hein Heckroth provides them with a setting that betrays its double origins, painting and theatre, and which transcends both. The central dance sequence »The Ballet of the Red Shoes« has a weightlessness that surpasses the spatial constraints of the stage. The ballet is based on the idea of metamorphosis. Dancers, props, and scenery transform with every new cut. The choreography begins in a conventional stage set, increasingly abandoning every spatial plausibility. The setting thus reflects the inner turmoil of the ballerina Victoria (Moira Shearer), who, like the character she is portraying, is drawn into a maelstrom from which she desperately tries to escape. The sequence culminates in a double exposure view of the stage with the surf breaking at the footlights and the orchestra and conductor (Marius Goring) also visible. At the decisive moment, the conductor transmutes into the possessive Lermontov (Anton Walbrook, i.e., Adolf Wohlbrück): art gains the authority to put reality in its place. This absolute claim is presented as a scenic opposition. During the ballet, close-ups repeatedly reveal the boards of the stage, snatching the audience out of the whirling illusion. And, vice versa, deliberate artificiality prevails in the world beyond the stage, especially in the fake exoticism of the Côte d'Azur sequence. On closer examination, a sunset proves to be a painted backdrop, and the scenery sometimes clearly betrays its nature as a studio set. Only the night-time carriage ride was shot on location, when dancer and conductor have become lovers and the absolute demand of art over life has been overcome. Nevertheless, the attraction of illusion, artificiality, finally proves irresistible and fatal.

THE RED SHOES (1947/48)
a | Design: Hein Heckroth (© Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main)
b | Hein Heckroth with model (© Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main)



PROSPERO´S BOOKS (1990/91)
a | c | Scene stills
THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER (1988/89)
b | Scene still

Interfaces

In THE RED SHOES the view behind the scenes (or of the audience, which is thus also partly staged) can be explained by the subject itself. The boom shot at the beginning of Peter Greenaways THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER (1988/89), which slides up scaffolding and lifting tackle to reach the level where the action takes place, reveals a sublevel of the built environment that raises suspicions that the illusion then created can be revoked at any time. This alienation effect is swiftly overcome (or is at least not resumed), but the action is nevertheless stamped as drama. The dinners in a gourmet restaurant to which a loutish gangster (Michael Gambon) invites his entourage resemble a court ceremony with entrances and exits and a servile audience. The camera frontality favoured in capturing the settings by Jan Roelfs and Ben van Os and the sweeping crab shots, which effortlessly pass through the walls between the different areas, reflect an attitude of proud exhibition. They flaunt the monumentality of their own visual values while keeping emotions at a distance. The theatrical sources of Greenaway's films (THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER lie in the satirical, bloodthirsty revenge tragedies of English Jacobean theatre, PROSPERO'S BOOKS, 1990/91, is adapted from Shake-

speare's »Tempest«) are indicative of a detached style of staging: the theatrical origin is transformed – always at the interface with still life or history painting. The studio atmosphere is a terrain of filmic availability. Greenaway brings the elements into play – wind, water, fire, and dust act as means of atmospheric transformation – without having to abandon the laboratory situation of the theatrical. This permitted Roelfs and van Os small allegories of their own creative process: models, superimposed on scenery, fit into Greenaway's image structure, in which smaller image squares are often inserted in the larger context. Prospero's (John Gielgud) study thus takes on the air of a theatre wagon.

Enough Air to Breath

In one of their discussions (which appeared in 1966 under the title »Le cinéma selon Hitchcock«), Hitchcock and Truffaut talked about a popular convention for the adaptation of stage plays. Hitchcock made no bones about his dislike of the obsessive loosening up of stage plays in adaptation for the screen by introducing outside scenes that destroy the unity of action and space. Truffaut countered with the French term »aérer« – ventilate: to open windows and let in the fresh air. In the twin films SMOKING / NO SMOKING (1993) there was not occasion to do so. They are well enough ventilated: all the scenes in Alain Resnais' Ayckbourn adaptation take place outside, hence in transitory spaces. But without exception they were shot in the studio. Resnais trusted in a remark by Sacha Guitry: »If theatrical figures are dragged into bright sunlight, placed in front of a real wood, it causes unease

SMOKING/NO SMOKING (1993)
a | c | Production design: Jacques Saulnier
b | d | Scene stills

and embarrassment.« Resnais even considered showing the theatre audience between scenes and filming his actors while they were making up and changing costumes. The original, obvious plan of a revolving stage was soon abandoned, since Resnais and his head décorateur Jacques Saulnier had what was then the biggest studio in Europe at their disposal in Arpajon. They had enough space to create tension between the acting area and the distant background. With the distant backgrounds, Saulnier emphasised the supposed openness of the construction. In his sets he found an equivalent to Resnais' playing with possibilities – two actors in nine roles, twelve different endings: Saulnier plays with variation and symmetry, linking the various place of action through similar details and motifs. This studio illusion was nonetheless the result of extensive location hunts on the English east coast, whose atmosphere Saulnier captures vividly and with a certain irony; on closer examination one discovers the (fake) traces of wear and tear and weather.

SMOKING/NO SMOKING (1993)
a | Production design: Jacques Saulnier
b | Scene still

Transparency and Secrecy

Lars von Trier's DOGVILLE (2003) reverses Resnais' love of paradox: all interiors are outside scenes. The rooms are mere ground plan drawings, there are no inside or outside walls. It is not difficult to understand this as a strict variation of dogma, a rejection of artificial scenery, a wager on how far constraint can be taken in pursuit of proud parsimony. It is primarily a scenic space that gives force to language. In its reduced means, DOGVILLE demonstrates an almost culinary tendency of theatrical scenery: respect for language, the polished word, the choice intonation. Off-screen narration recalls the roguish, revealing irony of a

Dickens or Fielding, creating distance and intimacy. Peter Grant's designs do not count on the image of American small towns familiar to us from innumerable films. The teasing renunciation of almost any architecture (the props, which always seem to appear by magic when needed, play a much greater role under these reduced circumstances) is not to be experienced as a gap but at best as a springboard for the imagination. This illusion of actual life-spheres is created forcefully only by lighting and sound dramaturgy. The bareness of the stage becomes an imposed element in the characters' lives. It frustrates their secretiveness, their strategies of suppression and concealment, bringing to light what has not been admitted. Spatial positions clarify emotional situations. This transparency not only requires the constant presence of the ensemble, it also gives the most dreadful moments a disturbing casualness. Intimacy is ensured only by cutting, by ellipses. Nowadays a cinema is possible that works like fusion in jazz, Lars von Trier once said about DOGVILLE: there is now no debate about whether something is filmic or not, the cinema can operate in every sort of setting. Von Trier's and Grant's open-mindedness is not frivolous. The air can circulate just as well in these closed rooms as in the wide-open spaces of the western or the boundlessness of the sea.

DOGVILLE (2003)
a | b | Scene stills

Bewegte Räume moving spaces

Production Design + Film | 21 Biographies (Vera Thomas)

Sir Kenneth Adam
Anna Asp
Patrizia von Brandenstein
Henry Bumstead
William Chang
Dante Ferretti
K. D. Gruber
Uli Hanisch
Robert Herlth
Alfred Hirschmeier
Lothar Holler
Erich Kettelhut
Jacques Lagrange
Alex McDowell
William Cameron Menzies
Jan Roelfs
Jacques Saulnier
Franz Schroedter
Richard Sylbert
Alexandre Trauner
Rolf Zehetbauer

Sir KENNETH ADAM

b. 1921 Berlin

»My aim has been to create a stylised reality for the audience that in the context of a particular dramatic moment or character is more ‚real' than a literal interpretation of reality.«

In 1934 at the age of thirteen, Ken Adam and his family move from Berlin to London. From 1938 to 1940, he attends the Bartlett School of Architecture while also working at an architectural firm. After WWII, during which Ken Adam serves in the Royal Air Force as a pilot, he begins to work in film at the Riverside Studios as a draughtsman and assistant to the set decorator. He receives his first public recognition for his production design of Ken Hughes' THE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE (1960) where he follows William Cameron Menzies' advice to »stylise an independent universe« and be bold when handling colours. For the seven James Bond films Adam designs, he experiments with, among other things, modern technology and new building materials. His visionary interiors can be reduced to very simple linear compositions, which are a witness to Bauhaus influences and a love for Expressionist and Futurist art. Adam has a special working relationship with Stanley Kubrick, for whose film DR. STRANGELOVE OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB (1963/64) he designs a War Room in the form of a triangle. For Adam drawings are the most important aid. First he begins with rough black and white sketches, before he then moves to detailed coloured illustrations and models. He receives his first Oscar for Kubrick's film BARRY LYNDON (1973-75), a second Oscar follows for Nicholas Hytner's THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE (1994).

ANNA ASP

b. 1946, Söderhamn, Sweden

»As a designer, I prefer period films to contemporary subjects. I find working with the past gives me more scope because I can be more objective about the world. With a contemporary film, there's no distance and the danger is that your decisions can be too easily influenced by personal taste rather than what is good for the film«.

Anna Asp first studies at the Stockholm School of Photography, following this she studies design at the Stockholm Film Academy. As the set decorator for the films of Ingmar Bergman, Asp learns to harmonize the colours of her sets and backgrounds to the requirements of the camera crew and to the changes the colours undergo during the film's chemical processing. For Bergman's FANNY OCH ALEXANDER (1981/82), Anna Asp wins the Oscar for »Best Art Direction« – as the Oscar is called which honours the production designer. Anna Asp's creative process begins with the film's central figures as well as the descriptions of the places where the story takes place. Basing her work on the script, she creates a notebook for the film's protagonists which contains collages of material, which she calls her »bibles«. In these notebooks, colours, material, models and other visual references are pieced together. Proportions, perspectives and lighting are worked out in drawings: furthermore Asp builds three dimensional models which convey an immediate impression of the film's atmosphere. Private and interior spaces mirror – as in Andrej Takowski's OFFRET (1985/86) or Bille August's THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS (1993) – the personality of their inhabitants. Asp likes to imagine the houses as being »independent characters« and thus designs them so; often through her arrangement of windows and doors, the facades of buildings are transformed into faces.

PATRIZIA VON BRANDENSTEIN

b. Phoenix, Arizona

»When I begin working on a film, I feel like I'm casting a great net out to sea and gathering in everything that gets caught within it. I'll sift through my catch until I find the image that to me distils what the film is about. I know I've found it when it begins to crop up everywhere I look – repeating itself in the pattern of the pipes or the layout of a floor… It's sort of like being paranoid.«

Patrizia von Brandenstein lives with her parents for a period of time in Paris, where she takes part in a youth programme at the Comédie Française and where she learns about the work that is done in the different departments of a theatre. Once she has returned to New York, she attends the Art Students League, and then works as a costume designer for the theatre. In the 1970s she begins also to work as a production designer. In 1977 von Brandenstein designs the costumes for John Badham's dance film SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER. In 1984 Patrizia von Brandenstein is the first woman to be awarded an Oscar in the category of »Best Art Direction« for Milos Forman's Film AMADEUS (1984). With a skilled colour concept she designs Mozart's surroundings with fresh pastel colours and silk materials to contrast with the dark, stolidly coloured rooms of his opponent Salieri. Von Brandenstein keeps track of every project's visual development in collages of material; which contain cloth, colour swatches, as well as the gels used in the lighting of the completed sets. In Mike Nichols' film SILKWOOD (1983), von Brandenstein contrasts the colours of the protagonist's Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep) place of work in a Plutonium factory, which is depicted in cold, pale green hues, with the warm colouring of her private surroundings. In order to better document and present the effect of a film set, Patrizia von Brandenstein films the interiors of her models with a small video camera: she is thus able to better take into account the camera angles and actor's blocking.

HENRY BUMSTEAD

b. 1915 Ontario, California

»I always try to soak up the mood of a picture. That's why doing the research is such a wonderful time. What you're looking for with research is a trigger. You might get inspiration from a picture of a room in a magazine – even if it's not the right style, there may be something in the layout of the space that gives you a spark.«

In the mid 1930s, after finishing his studies in art and architecture Henry Bumstead begins working as a draughtsman at Paramount Studios. As the assistant to the German emigrant Hans Dreier, who as head of the Art Department is responsible for Paramount's elegant visual style, he is given in 1948 his first film credit as art director for his set design of Leslie Fenton's SAIGON. Following this he designs mostly contemporary settings, but also Westerns and period pictures. Bumstead works with directors such as Anthony Mann, Nicholas Ray, Michael Curtiz and Billy Wilder. He receives his first Oscar for Robert Mullligan's TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (1962), his second for George Roy Hill's THE STING (1973) a film – designed in earthy brown tones – which shows Bumstead's predilection for understated colour. For Alfred Hitchcock, who prefers to shoot in the studio rather than on location – he designs sets which coordinate with each other down to the most minute detail. Bumstead's skill when handling space can be seen in VERTIGO (1957/58) with his use of matte paintings and »false« perspectives, which are exactly conceived for the camera angle. Henry Bumstead continues to work as a production designer, teaming up with director Clint Eastwood, with whom he shares a close relationship, since their first collaboration on UNFORGIVEN (1992).

WILLIAM CHANG

b. 1953, Shanghai

»In the past, the design of some films were big influences, like Bernardo Bertoluccis IL CONFORMISTA (1969/70). Nowadays, even the colour of a pair of shoes in ‚Vogue' could inspire me. I'm lucky in the sense that I have a knack for visual things and don't need something tangible to free my imagination.«

After graduating from school, William Chang works as a textile designer. He learns about the film business while working as an assistant director. After attending film school in Vancouver, Canada, Chang moves to Hong Kong where he works as a designer in the music and magazine industry. In the 1980s Chang becomes one of the most influential forerunners of Hong Kong production design through his work on films such as Patrick Tam's LOVE MASSACRE (1981) or Yim Ho's HOMECOMING (1984). The beginning of his extraordinary collaboration with his friend Wong Kar-wai dates from this period. Together they advance to international recognition with their film CHUNGKING EXPRESS (1994). With the cameraman Christopher Doyle, they redefine the aesthetic of Hong Kong cinema. Chang sees his role as a production designer as being a comprehensive one: unusual but also for Chang characteristic, in Wong Kar-wai's films he is responsible for the costume design and even the editing. Parallel to the plot of IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (2000) which follows the development of the protagonists in almost barely perceptible nuances, Chang displays his concept of space in only a few, slightly varied settings: an office, a narrow alley and very close rooms and corridors. Chang places great importance on the details which also achieve symbolical denotation: from the choices of the costumes to rendering an optical fineness to the food. With his polished colour dramaturgy, Chang succeeds in making the bygone epoch and atmosphere of a particular society live on screen again.

DANTE FERRETTI

b. 1943 Macerata, Italy

»I always try to find ways of manipulating reality to accentuate the central focus of the film. I'll exaggerate certain details and discard others.«

In the early 1960s Dante Ferretti studies set design at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome. He is then assistant to film architect Luigi Scaccianoce for almost ten years. His first assignment as production designer is Pier Paolo Pasolini's MEDEA (1969). From Pasolini he learns to draw inspiration from painting for the artistic composition of his set designs. Thus his design for IL DECAMERON (1970/71) is strongly influenced by the works of Giotto. The layout of the labyrinthine library he designs for Jean-Jacques Annaud's THE NAME OF THE ROSE (1985/86) suggests an etching out of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's »Caceri« cycle. For Ferretti, it's always about abstracting reality, as in Martin Scorsese's KUNDUN (1997), where he also uses computer generated graphics. Historical scenarios in Ferretti's work are less about reproducing reality but rather interpreting it. For the benefit of the overall effect, traditions are undermined and styles are mixed; Ferretti's film sets are able to tell stories that run parallel to that of the film. Exemplary for his work with Federico Fellini, who always emphasizes film's relation to dreams, is his set for E LA NAVE VA (1982/83). The gigantic boat is built in the studio and moves on a sea made out of plastic tarpaulin. With an extraordinary sensibility, Ferretti constructs settings on the grounds of the studio's back lot and in the Atelier; as in Martin Scorsese's GANGS OF NEW YORK (2002) for whom he built whole blocks of streets and the docks of New York in Cinecittà. Pastel drawings on dark-coloured paper clarify the lighting conditions and operate as a starting point for the building of models, with which Feretti prefers to work.

K. D. GRUBER

b. 1961, Ulm

»The look of a scene appears successful, when it corresponds to the demands of the script at the same time as following an artistic aspect which lends the film an individual aesthetic quality.«

In the 1980s K. D. Gruber studies Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering, Art History and Media Studies in Berlin before he works as an assistant set designer and props master. One of his first projects is the set design for Christian Petzold's TV drama PILOTINNEN (1994/95). Along with films by Angela Schanelec, Mark Schlichter and Florian Gärtner, Gruber designs all of the films for Christian Petzold. In 2001 their film DIE INNERE SICHERHEIT (2000/01) is awarded the Deutsche Filmpreis. Gruber consequently transfers the formal minimalism of the stories and characters unto the places where the film takes place. Hotel rooms, meeting places in empty side-road diners or the glass car dealership in WOLFSBURG (2002/03) all underline the lost state of the protagonists and at the same time create an atmosphere, which threatens to implode at any moment. In the pre-production phase of a film, Gruber works with photographs; basing his work on the script, he scouts out locations himself and documents his findings on panoramic photos. He investigates perspectives and the plasticity of the image by working with models, whose walls, doors and windows can be inserted randomly. He develops the film's dramaturgical colour palette by laying paint chips into the model from the »colour keyboards« that Le Corbusier, developed for monochromatic Salubra wallpapers. While on location the changes to the design can vary from a re-arrangement of the details to a complete rebuilding of the set: Guber is also responsible for set decoration.

ULI HANISCH

b. 1967, Nürnberg

»This is the basic idea behind my work: I construct an emotionally charged space, which carries the story. I hardly ever use ninety degree angles anymore. For the camera there is nothing more boring than a rectangle. When you and the director get together and say: ‚the world is like this' – that is a wonderful attitude of mind, well then everything is possible.«

While studying Visual Communication in Düsseldorf, Uli Hanisch works at first as a graphic artist for different advertising agencies. In 1987 he begins his collaboration with the director Christoph Schlingensief, for whom he designs the set of DAS DEUTSCHE KETTEN-SÄGENMASSAKER (1990) and TERROR 2000 (1992/93). He also works on films for Helge Schneider. As set designer and props master, Hanisch is in charge of several television films, series and »Die Harald Schmidt Show«. Along with successful German productions such as Max Färberböck's AIMÉE & JAGUAR (1998/99) and Sönke Wortmann's DAS WUNDER VON BERN (2002/03), Hanisch's know-how is in demand by international productions: he works on Peter Greenaway's THE BABY OF MACON (1992/93) with the design team Jan Roelfs und Ben van Os. His first collaboration with Tom Tykwer in 1996 is WINTERSCHLÄFER; further projects follow. Hanisch designs the elaborate sets for the psychiatric clinic in DER KRIEGER UND DIE KAISERIN (1999/2000) and the police building in HEAVEN (2000–2002). He specializes in architectural situations, which result in a mounting sense of dread. In Hanisch's spaces one does not at first notice the desired deformations and distortions. But the sophistication of his designs comes across in the strongly atmospheric compositions with cleverly thought-out perspectives. For his design of Oliver Hirschbiegel's DAS EXPERIMENT (2000), Uli Hanisch is awarded together with Andrea Kessler the Deutsche Filmpreis in 2001. The filming of Patrick Süskind's »Das Parfüm« is planned for 2005 with Tom Tykwer directing.

ROBERT HERLTH

b. 1983 Wrietzen an der Oder, d. 1962 Munich

»There can be no scenery as such, but only one which is created especially for the aesthetic concept; whether realistic, romantic or surreal.«

Robert Herlth begins to study fine arts at the Berlin Hochschule der Künste in 1912. In 1920 he and his colleague Walter Röhrig are hired by the Ufa: they become part of the director F. W. Murnau and his cameraman Karl Freund's creative team. For Joe May's film ASPHALT (1928/29) Herlth drafts drawings in perspective: the city's architecture is used dramaturgically. Revolutionary for its time is also Herlth's designing of the special effect where Mephisto's coat is used for flight in Murnau's film FAUST (1925/26). He is responsible for engineering the constructions used for the filming of Leni Riefenstahl's OLYMPIA films (1936-38). At the end of WWII he makes his living for a short time as a set designer for the theatre. In 1948 he is able to take up his work on Murnau's FAUST interpretation with his sets for Carmine Gallone's LA LEGGENDA DI FAUST (1948/49). In hundreds of sketches he creates scenery contemporary to the time and takes special note of the artistic ideas as well as aspects of the technical practicability: the lighting, the camera choreography, or the choice of frame shots. During his career Herlth works mainly on black and white films – for example Rolf Hansen's TEUFEL IN SEIDE (1955/56). By the visual transfer of scripts into film he does also fill spaces with vividly coloured hues, as in Wolfgang Liebeneiner's DIE TRAPP-FAMILIE (1956). For Alfred Weidenmann's two-part DIE BUDDENBROOKS (1959) Robert Herlth is awarded the Deutsche Filmpreis.

ALFRED HIRSCHMEIER

b. 1931, Berlin, d. 1996, Potsdam

»A good set designer has to create pictures with content; he has got to build with his corresponding means the scene's space and its contents – that is the props and all the necessary ingredients that belong which are required by the picture's expression and dramaturgy.«

At the end of WWII Alfred Hirschmeier completes an apprenticeship as a scene painter at the Defa-Studios and studies stage design at the Meisterschule für das Kunsthandwerk: his goal is to work in film. As an assistant to Willy Schiller, the head of set decoration for the Defa, Hirschmeier begins in 1953 to work as a set designer: his first project, Günter Reisch's JUNGES GEMÜSE (1955/56). For Frank Beyer's KARBID UND SAUERAMPFER (1963) Hirschmeier designs the foreground models for the river Elbe's destroyed bridge. He coordinates the colour scheme for Konrad Wolf's historical film GOYA (1969/70) with the colours typical of the painter's palette. For SOLO SUNNY (1978/80) Hirschmeier creates two very personally decorated, contemporary flats typical of the older Berlin apartment buildings in the Prenzlauer Berg district. Hirschmeier prepares for his work using optical scripts, in which he sketches the course of movement. In order to allow room for new ideas and intuitive inspiration during the shoot, these storyboards are seldom used by the director during the filming. During the location scout, Hirschmeier works with photographs: on top of the photos, which already take possible camera perspectives into account, he lays a transparency, onto which he sketches the characters and props. In order to keep an overview of the whole beyond the straight spatial concept, Hirschmeier integrates into his sketches the central figure of the film and accentuates via clothing, accessories and props the atmosphere of the set. In 1993 Alfred Hirschmeier becomes professor for set design, a programme of studies he himself founded, at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Konrad Wolf in Potsdam.

LOTHAR HOLLER

b. 1948, Berlin

»In a certain sense I build flats around the figures themselves. As a set designer one works like a criminologist, but the other way round: one assigns the things to the people.«

Lothar Holler studies costume and set design at the Kunsthochschule in Berlin-Weißensee. In the mid 1970s Holler begins to work for the Defa and GDR television. In the Defa-Studios Holler learns to construct another kind of set design: a kind of a modular construction system which is conceived to be re-usable. Since 1992 Lothar Holler has been working as a freelance production designer for television, theatre and film. For Jo Baier's DER LADEN (1997/98), a literary adaptation of Erwin Strittmatter's autobiographical novel by the same name, Lothar Holler designs sets which perfectly come up to the novel's settings and mirror more than three decades of changes in the private and historical sphere of the characters. Ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Holler rebuilds the East Berlin part of the street Sonnenalle on the Babelsberg studio lot for Leander Haußmann's comedy SONNENALLEE (1998/99); Characteristic is the film's dimmed light and the brown tone palette, as if covered by a grey veil. With Wolfgang Becker's Film GOOD BYE, LENIN! (2002/03), his reputation as a specialist for authentic and detailed East-German settings is confirmed. The »79 square metres of the GDR« for GOOD BYE, LENIN! is re-built for the studio; the flat out of a Plattenbau – a typical for the GDR prefabricated high-rise – is however built much larger in order to make room for the camera's travelling shots, actors and lighting. Holler finds it very important that for the actors the sets and settings of a film feel as realistic as possible in a tactile sense. For SONNENALLEE and GOOD BYE, LENIN!, Holler is awarded the Deutsche Filmpreis for his production design. Since 2004 Lothar Holler is professor for Set Design at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Konrad Wolf in Potsdam.

ERICH KETTELHUT

b. 1893, Berlin, d. 1979, Hamburg

»For me the first commandment is the characterization of the inhabitants via the presentation of their milieu: I am always aware what this is and I often have to fight to maintain it. During its heyday, the Ufa demanded authenticity down to the last detail from its film designers: corresponding to the requirements of the plot, there should be pomp and circumstance where it was suitable, but also meagreness and shabbiness, even dirt and dilapidation.«

Erich Kettelhut completes an apprenticeship as a scene painter for the theatre and also takes lessons in painting at the Berlin Kunstgewerbeschule. Before he is conscripted for war duty, he completes a set design with Otto Hunte for the theatre in Aachen. At the end of WWI, Hunte hires him for film productions. As an assistant in Joe May's major production DIE HERRIN DER WELT (1919/20) Kettelhut learns the skills of a set designer. During this time he witnesses the transition from the two-dimensional theatrical scenic painting to the building of three-dimensional sets with perspective for film. Together with cameraman Karl Puth, Kettelhut experiments with the height and width of angles and develops a distinct sensibility for film set design. For Fritz Lang's DR. MABUSE, DER SPIELER (1921/22) Kettelhut renders Otto Hunte's blueprints and plans into reality. After designing the spectacular sets for Lang's METROPOLIS (1925/26), Kettelhut specialises in the building of architectural models and in the making of special effects for film. He is also responsible for the hidden camera positions, which allow for the street scenes in Walther Ruttmann's BERLIN. DIE SINFONIE DER GROSSSTADT (1926/27) to be filmed unobserved. In 1929 Kettelhut undertakes the creation of the first Ufa full-length feature sound film MELODIE DES HERZENS by Hanns Schwarz. Further song-and-dance films follow such as Georg Jacoby's DIE FRAU MEINER TRÄUME (1943/44). At the end of WWII Kettelhut orients his work in set design on the work he did in the thirties and forties. In the 1950s he once again designs for musicals such as Georg Jacoby's SENSATION IN SAN REMO (1951).

JACQUES LAGRANGE

b. 1917 Paris, d. 1995 Paris

»Tati asked me to design some scenery for him. Using international architectural magazines, scissors and some glue, I made a montage for him. I took elements from all over: bull's eyes, idiotic pergolas, curved paths, in order to make the site look bigger. Everything was exactly planned out. It was the non plus ultra. It was an architectural potpourri.«

Jacques Lagrange receives his artistic training at the École des Arts Décoratifs and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. At first he concentrates his talents on painting. After WWII he joins an artist's group, but also designs numerous tapestries, costumes, and sets for theatrical productions. Jacques Lagrange's greatest passion is however for architectural projects. In 1953 his artistic partnership with Jacques Tati begins, which continues for more than three decades. They share an ironic take on the increasing role of modern technology in life and the commercialized leisure industry. For MON ONCLE (1956-58) Lagrange brought out the contrast between the falling-down suburb home of Monsieur Hulot and the fully automated villa of the brother-in-law Monsieur Arpel – completely built in the studio. In PLAYTIME (1964-67) the sets of the mundane lives behind the facades of the apartment houses are placed parallel to the working routines in the glass office containers. The working relationship between Lagrange and Tati is especially close due to the fact that Lagrange is also involved in the developing of the film scripts as co-author. For the production design, Lagrange details every aspect in colourful drafts, his sets always correspond exactly to Tati's choreography, in order to support the minutely rehearsed actor's physical comedy.

ALEX McDOWELL

b. Borneo, Malaysia 1955

»Pre-vis is a logical combination of storyboarding and computer generated visual effects. Directors should accept storyboard tools, since they are absolutely accurate in showing them live the conditions of a camera shot, even before the set is built.«

After his studies at the London Central College of Art, Alex McDowell founds his own graphic design firm and designs album covers and posters for bands such as The Sex Pistols, The Clash and singers such as Iggy Pop in the late 1970s. As MTV goes on air, McDowell develops the production design for TV spots and music videos; he receives special recognition for the Madonna video VOGUE (1995), and three years later for the film FIGHT CLUB both directed by David Fincher. In the 1990s McDowell begins to work for feature film directors such as Terry Gilliam, Steven Spielberg and Alex Proyas in Hollywood. For Steven Spielberg's MINORITY REPORT (2001/2002) he lets himself be inspired by magazines, photos and books and hires several computer graphic artists, who transfer his ideas into visuals. Unlike many of his colleagues, McDowell does not make a distinction between production design and visual effects. One of the most eloquent proponents of pre-vis technique – a kind of computer generated three dimensional storyboard – Alex McDowell designs Spielberg's TERMINAL (2003/2004), one of the largest film sets of all time. Other production designers use the new computer techniques in order to get around building complicated, real and cost intensive sets: McDowell however uses a computer for the planning of plot locations down to the finest detail of camera travelling shots and lighting, then constructs a model which later serves the building of a real set.

WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES

b. 1896, New Haven, Connecticut, d. 1957, Beverly Hills, California

»The first thing I do when I start to sketch, is draw in circles for the faces of the actors. I figure out the set as a consideration how many feet an actor will have to walk to get from center stage to exit at left center.«

After William Cameron Menzies studies at Yale University, he attends the Art Students League in New York. During this time, Menzies works for the advertising industry and illustrates children's books. After WWI ends, Menzies begins his career as an art director at Famous Players–Lasky Corporation. His reputation as a gifted cinematic designer is unquestionably confirmed with Raoul Walsh's THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (1924). William C. Menzies, who works as an independent of the film studios, soon enjoys a privileged position in Hollywood. From early on Menzies works with storyboards, which are for him his most important tool in overseeing the aesthetic of a film. For the sets used in Alan Crosland's THE BELOVED ROGUE (1927) Menzies is inspired by the German expressionist silent films. At the very first Oscar awards ceremony in May 1929, he wins in the category of »Best Art Direction« for his work on Roland West's THE DOVE and Sam Taylor's TEMPEST. After directing his own productions in the 1930s, as in for example the futurist film THINGS TO COME (1936-38), Menzies once again returns to creating sets with Victor Fleming's GONE WITH THE WIND (1938/39). Despite countless changes of script and directors, Menzies succeeds in giving the film its immense stunning visual unity. In order to best describe this artistic and organizational achievement, the producer David O. Selznick coined the term »production designer«.

JAN ROELFS

b. 1957 Rotterdam

»An important factor in the production of the Greenaway films was certainly that we developed an stylised aesthetic, modular structures, symmetrical compositions and that we were just about obsessed with the re-usability of places, material, building pieces.«

Jan Roelfs is employed by various architectural firms in Amsterdam and Rotterdam after his studies in interior design. By chance he falls into film, when filmmaking friends ask him for advice in decorating and film architecture. Roelfs works for almost ten years with the production designer Ben van Os: the first big film project for them is Peter Greenaway's A ZED AND TWO NOUGHTS (1985/86); with him they design four more feature films, as well as numerous art installations, advertising spots and performances. For THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER (1988/89) – as well as later for PROSPERO'S BOOKS (1990/91) – they build a basis set, which appears again and again in numerous scenes and which can be, when necessary, renewed, repainted and redecorated piece by piece. Greenaway's dramaturgy is mirrored in the symmetrical structures and the modular concepts of the settings. After Sally Potter's ORLANDO (1992), for which they both receive an Oscar nomination, Roelfs and van Os take separate paths. In 1997 Jan Roelfs creates the design for the sci-fi film GATTACA, with its fascinating monochrome colour scheme and steel-like surface smoothness. Roelfs purposely does not present a fantastic future, but rather portrays a reduced and changed form of the present. For the space control headquarters he chooses the Marin County Civic Centre built by Frank Lloyd Wright. Roelfs sees every film set as being something moveable. He seldom works with sketches, which he sees as being too static thereby limiting the designer's fantasy. He is also very sparing with his use of digital computer technology.

JACQUES SAULNIER

b. 1928, Paris

»For me, the director, the cameraman, and the actors it is very useful to see everything built to scale. With a drawing one can imagine everything possible, but with a model you see everything right there.«

Jacques Saulnier begins his studies in the early 1950s in the set decoration department of the Paris Film Academy. For almost ten years he is assistant to luminaries such as Alexandre Trauner, Max Douy and other eminent chefs décorateurs of the time. With fellow student Bernard Evein, whose experience with painting complements Saulnier's architectural work methods, he realises his first projects: one of which is Louis Malles' LES AMANTS (1958). Saulnier's work as production designer for Alain Resnais' L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD (1960/61) is the beginning of an extremely productive and creative working partnership which lasts till the present day. In the early phase of the creative process, Saulnier already works with models in order to clarify camera positions and the actor's blocking. With his set decoration Jacques Saulnier finds the exact equivalent for Resnais' play with variation and symmetry. Saulnier brought together different settings for SMOKING/NO SMOKING (1993) by using similar building details and motifs. The artificiality of the exterior locations for SMOKING/NO SMOKING – which was shot completely in a studio - plays on the script being originally written for the theatre.

FRANZ SCHROEDTER

b. 1897, Berlin, d. 1968, Hamburg

»With our work we bear a share of the responsibility for the success or lack of success of a film. We are the avant-garde in the fine arts, who day in and day out fight the big fight with the producers, in order to ensure that this art form receives its justified place among filmmaking.«

Shortly after his studies in Architecture, Franz Schroedter signs his first contract to work on a film with set designer Willi Hermann. Schroedter's work with Carl Froelich enjoys a special status in his biography: he designs numerous Henny-Porten films for him. Schroedter's sets are specifically made for the camera's angle of vision and characterize the figures in their surroundings. Thus the lost state of the protagonists in Froelich's ZUFLUCHT (1928) is mirrored in the sets of the waiting rooms and of the Berlin street scenes. His charcoal and chalk drawings of the offices for Froelich's DIE NACHT GEHÖRT UNS (1929) are inspired by the modernity of the Bauhaus movement. For this early German sound film, Schroedter furthermore equips the sets and scenery with all the latest technical necessities for the new medium. His wide experience in this field leads him in the 1930s to be named as the architect and planner for the conversion of the German film studios. Not until four years after the end of WWII, does Schroedter design and build again for film: he works on Willi Forst's DIE SÜNDERIN (1950/51) and DER VERLORENE (1951) directed by Peter Lorre. During these years a new challenge arises for Schroedter; namely the building of sets for trade fairs and the production of Industrial films. As in his set designs, his work as a director is also characterised by his experience with technical processes. In his films, he succeeds in translating complex technology into simple and understandable pictures. For the Volkswagen manufacturers he produces the industrial film AUS EIGENER KRAFT (1953) which mirrors the economic miracle of the post war boom.

RICHARD SYLBERT

b. 1928, Brooklyn, New York, d. 2002, Woodland Hills, California

»Metaphor. Basic action. Emotional dynamics. These became the keys to the approach I evolved over the years. My aim is to rewrite a script in visual terms; to reflect dramatic structure through the design elements at my disposal – architectural space, line, color, pattern, repetition, contrast.«

Richard Sylbert studies with his twin brother Paul Sylbert, who also becomes a production designer, at Temple University's Tyler School of Design in Philadelphia. First he paints scenery for TV productions. His collaboration with William Cameron Menzies in the early 1950s is one of the most influential experiences of his life. One of his first feature film productions as production designer is working on Elia Kazan's BABY DOLL (1956) Subsequently Sylbert takes part in making numerous eminent film classics; for Mike Nichols's WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF (1965/66) he is awarded his first Oscar. Sylbert rewrites a script's dramatic structure with regards to the design and architectural constellations. Then he draws plans and outlines, on top of which he sketches with colour which serves as a basis for the establishing shots. Richard Sylbert puts together a »recipe« for each one of his films; in it he varies the interiors and references, as in music with its repetitions and the theme being played in different keys. Characteristic for Sylbert is a very detailed colour dramaturgy, inspired by tonal painting. The reduced tones of his colour palette for Roman Polanski's CHINATOWN (1974), which plays during a drought, mirror the heat of the sun's rays and the barren landscape. Warren Beatty's DICK TRACY (1990) is filmed in the intense and rich colours of the original comic strip. Richard Sylbert receives his second Oscar for this film.

ALEXANDRE TRAUNER

b. 1906, Budapest, d. 1993, Ormonville-la-Petite

»The challenge, which was to be rendered into reality, was building the largest office in the world. Cunningly I decided to build a film set on the studio's lot, where the perspective would play a decisive role. And so we created the completely perspectively built roof, which had the effect of emphasizing the space's depth.«

Alexandre Trauner studies painting in the early 1920s at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. In 1925 his first paintings are exhibited in a group show. Because of the anti-semitic atmosphere of his homeland, Trauner emigrates to Paris in 1929. With the help of artist friends he is hired to work on the décor of René Clair's film SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS (1930) and works on its sequel as assistant to the Chef Décorateur Lazare Meerson. In the early 1930s he becomes acquainted with Jacques Prévert, the writer of numerous film scripts for classics of poetic realism such as Marcel Carnés QUAI DES BRUMES (1938) or LE JOUR SE LÈVE (1939). Alexandre Trauner designs the settings based on his pastel coloured sketches, which are more painted than drawn. Without appearing in the film credits, he continues to work throughout the time of Germany's invasion of France. After WWII, Trauner is hired by Orson Welles and other American directors. As a specialist for the design of a romantic Paris, Trauner creates the set decoration for films such as IRMA LA DOUCE (1962/63) by Billy Wilder, with whom he works on eight films. The spacious interior of the office in Wilder's THE APARTMENT (1959/60) is based on perspectives which make it appear to be extremely wide. For this project, Trauner is awarded an Oscar. After maintaining a long residence in Hollywood, Trauner works once again in France on films by Bertrand Tavernier, Luc Besson and Joseph Losey in the 1970s.

ROLF ZEHETBAUER

b. 1929, Munich

»One cannot want to be too precise. My work is about creating a great setting; it should not be too overpowering, not too full of props. The atmosphere should be just right.«

In 1947 Rolf Zehetbauer begins attending the Staatsbauschule München and the Schule für angewandte Kunst München. After working as an assistant in the Bavaria Studios, Zehetbauer designs his first set for Walter Janssen's DIE ALM AN DER GRENZE (1951). In 1963 Zehetbauer becomes head production designer for Bavaria Film: here Bob Fosse's musical CABARET (1971/72) is created; it is an unexpected world success, for which Zehetbauer along with Jürgen Kiebach is awarded an Oscar. The »Berlin streets« which he designs on the Munich back lot of the Bavaria Studios for Ingmar Bergman's THE SERPENT'S EGG (1976/77) are used, with small changes, for numerous productions such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder's films. Theirs is an intensive working relationship right up to Fassbinder's last film QUERELLE (1982), for whom Zehetbauer designs dark, crumbling docklands. In the 1980s Zehetbauer continues to work on large-scale projects such as DAS BOOT (1980/81) or DIE UNENDLICHE GESCHICHTE (1983/84). With his own company »Phantasy and Partners« he carries out Joseph Vilsmaier's COMEDIAN HARMONISTS (1997) for which he is awarded his fourth Deutsche Filmpreis. For Eric Till's LUTHER (2003) Zehetbauer finds a compromise between real locations and studio sets by reproducing the market place of the medieval Wittenberg with digital matte paintings.

Photographic acknowledgements

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