

Set Decoration & Property Craft Descriptions

The Set Decoration Department

Set decorations are the furnishings, objects, and décor that constitutes a set, including light fixtures, rugs, furniture, etc. After the set is built by Construction and finishes applied by Paint, or after the location is secured, the Set Decoration department may 'dress' the set by installing practical light fixtures, wall hangings, laying out large items, and then building up many layers of smaller items until the set is 'opened' and tuned over to the shooting crew. Successful decoration can communicate the setting of the storyline, create moods, interesting compositions of items to camera, and enhance the overall production design of the movie.

Set Decorator

Set Decorators are both interior and exterior designers who are well versed in the history of furnishings, objects, design, and art. They are responsible for selecting the furnishings and other background objects to be placed on set, as well as understanding any drapery or lighting in the set. Through their selections, they must be able to create a wide range of environments: from choosing the interior furnishings for a mansion to the street lamps, fire hydrants and park benches in a street scene. To this end, the Set Decorator must also know how to read architectural plans, break down a script, and have a sense of where to acquire a wide range of items, while creating and maintaining a budget.

The Set Decorator is the head of the whole Set Decoration department, yet works under the Production Designer, Director and Producers. The Leadman and Set Dressers in turn support the vision of the Set Decorator. The Set Decorator is responsible for delegating projects and ensuring that all work is being completed on time and that orders arrive, are sorted to set, and are dressed onto set before the shoot date.

Lead Person / Leadman

The 'Leadperson' or 'Leadman' provides assistance to the Set Decorator by hiring and overseeing the work of a crew of Set Dressers.

The Leadman is responsible for:

- employing and laying off the Set Dressers
- coordinating pickups and deliveries of set dressing
- coordinating appropriate times necessary to prep/dress/reset/strike sets
- handling call times, notifying the Set Dressers of where to report for work
- insuring the crew breaks for lunch and wraps on time in order to avoid contractual penalties
- collecting, submitting, and approving timecards for processing
- renting to production a kit of tools, hardware, and equipment needed for the entire crew of set dressers
- purchasing tools, supplies and set dressing items with a P-card, purchase orders, check requests, and managing petty cash.
- ensuring that Set Dressing crew is provided with location parking
- providing appropriate safety equipment and PPE for the Set Dressers
- setting up a "lockup" or "goldroom", essentially a warehouse with shelving for storage and organization of set decorations and kit

On-Set Dresser

The On-Set Dresser is the representative for the Set Decoration department while the shooting crew is actively filming the set. The On-Set Dresser is responsible for adjusting the set decoration to camera and to suit particular scenes, fixing and repairing broken items on the fly, fulfilling any special requests by the Director, maintaining continuity, and photographically documenting the set for the purposes of continuity and potential reshoots. The On-Set Dresser helps the crew by moving items out of the way to accommodate cameras and lighting and re-dressing the set once the camera angle changes. The On-Set Dresser must have their own kit of on-set specific tools and implements including:

- a camera
- a walkie-talkie headset
- a cleaning kit with brooms, dust mop, portable vacuum and steamer, cleaning cloths and various cleaning solutions
- a hardware kit
- a drill
- a variety of hand tools
- wires, tapes, adhesives, cutting implements,
- furniture sliders, felt chair leg pads
- 2 and 4-wheel dollies

Gang Boss

The Gang Boss takes orders from the Leadman and helps direct the crew of Set Dressers in day-to-day tasks. The Gang Boss is responsible for:

- keeping track of workflow and time management in order to get tasks completed in an efficient manner and reporting the progress of the day to the Leadman
- keeping track of pick-up paperwork and purchase receipts to later deliver to the Leadman
- keeping track of supplies and notifying the Leadman if the crew needs something
- working directly alongside the Set Dressers

Set Dressers/Swing Gang

Set Dressers also known as the Swing Gang make up the majority of the Set Decoration crew and are responsible for the movement, placement, installation, repair, and care of set decoration under the supervision of the Set Decorator. While the Set Decorator is ultimately responsible for dictating how the set dressing is to be arranged, the Set Dressers physically handle and arrange the property. Set Dressers may be asked to rough in a set to blueprints or plans before the Set Decorator arrives to dress the set. They can be involved with installing light fixtures, altering or fabricating set decorations, packing set decorations for transport and storage, organizing the warehouse, cleaning and maintaining the sets, and the wrap of the sets. Set Dressers use a variety of tools to do their job. While this is by no means a complete list, Set Dressers are expected to bring the following basic tools with them to work:

- closed-toed shoes
- clothing appropriate to the climate i.e. a rain jacket or winter weather gear
- a multi-tool
- work gloves
- a box cutter

- permanent markers
- a measuring tape
- a flashlight
- hand-tools such as a hammer, pliers, screwdriver, crescent wrench, pipe wrench
- a mechanic's ratchet set
- a drill with an extensive variety of bits
- an Allen wrench set

Skills and qualifications that are helpful for Set Dressers to possess include:

- forklift & aerial lift safety training,
- an interest in the history of furnishings, construction, art and design
- experience with professional moving or professional art handling
- knowledge of hardware, the use of hand tools, and power tools
- attention to detail and an eye for arrangement
- knowledge of how to use a variety of dollies and pallet jacks to move items safely
- basic electrical, plumbing, and construction skills

Draperer

The Draperer is an experienced sewing person who specializes in creating fabric window treatments for sets. The Decorator will give the Draperer window dimensions, ideal length, width, fullness, and style of curtain and the Draperer cuts and sews each panel with custom ordered fabric and trim.

Draperers are expected to bring professional sewing machines to work as part of their rental kit. They may also keep a kit of other commonly used materials such as a variety of thread, measuring tapes, scissors, needles, sewing tools, glue gun, iron, pins, drapery hooks and hardware, to complete their job.

Draperers should know how to sew a variety of materials, create a variety of pleat styles, know how to sew a transom curtain, rod pocket and cafe curtains, roman blinds, swags, and tie-backs among others. Draperers should understand how to work with large scale bolts of fabric, repeats etc.

Upholsterer

Upholsterers may customize and alter the fabric coverings of pre-existing furniture, or they may be tasked with upholstering a custom-built frame made by Construction. Good Upholsterers will know how to upholster a variety of different forms: from leather car seats to mid-century modern sectional furniture set. Upholsterers are expected to bring a full upholstery kit to work: whatever tools are necessary to complete the project on time, the decorator supplies custom fabrics. Projects may entail reading off of a plan or schematic drawing.

Set Decoration Buyer

The Set Decoration Buyer works closely with the Set Decorator to find, order, and purchase set decoration. The Decorator will request certain items and the buyer must have a long list of specialty vendors, shops, artisans, and prop houses that can supply the appropriate pieces. Buyers work partly out of the office and handle petty cash, a P-card, purchase orders, and check requests. They file weekly Amex and petty cash envelopes of purchases for accounting.

They may tour prop houses and other outlets in search of items and take pictures and dimensions of select pieces for the Decorator. The Buyer must be able to drive and pick up some smaller purchases (in their own vehicle in some cases), have a laptop computer, measuring tape, and cellphone to receive work calls and send pictures. Buyers have an interest and knowledge of furnishings and design and are good at understanding the needs of someone else's creative vision.

Set Decoration Coordinator

The Set Decoration Coordinator works almost exclusively out of the office on keeping the budget up to date by tracking receipts and expenditures and comparing them to the approved initial budget. The Coordinator brings their own computer to work as part of their kit and works primarily out of Excel. The Coordinator may also upload photos to the Dropbox or shared department folders, or use other programs to keep track of script breakdowns for the Decorator, and other clerical tasks. The Coordinator may manage timecards for the office and oversee the tasks of a production assistant.