

PAINT DEPARTMENT

Job Titles

Regarding the website's search categories list, please combine Sign Painter/Writer.

Key Scenic

Key Scenic/Head Painters are responsible for all the work carried out by the painting team. This involves all the traditional painting skills required of domestic painters, combined with other skills specific to the film industry.

They begin by discussing plans with Production Designer(s), Artistic Director(s), and Construction Coordinator(s) to establish the amount of work required and how long it will take. They look at what finishes are needed and where they are to be applied, color schemes, textures, and any other special requirements.

Once the crews are in place, Key Scenic supervises their activities, and make sure that the work is divided equally. The Key Scenic is in constant communication with both the Paint Foreman and crew Gang-Boss to ensure that work in the shop and on locations is carried out according to the standards, budgets and deadlines set by Construction Coordinator(s).

Scenic Foreman

Scenic Foreman is usually an experienced Scenic Artist or Set Painter, who can also perform the role of managing a large Paint crew. The Scenic Foreman is assigned a set or location by the Key Scenic, and given a crew of Set Painters to direct in the completion of any paint projects. If available, a Paint Utility Person will also be assigned to that set/location to assist with transportation of equipment/materials, set-up and clean up of the project site. The Scenic Foreman is in contact with the Key Scenic regarding the particulars and progress of their set, and the Paint Foreman regarding the replenishing of materials and transport of equipment.

Occasionally a production will also employ a Paint Shop Foreman, who works with the Key Scenic organizing manpower, equipment and materials for the various paint projects on a production. The Paint Foreman coordinates the availability and transport of materials/equipment with Scenic Foremen/Gang-Bosses on sets and locations, and manages the Paint Utility personnel regarding the order and upkeep of the Paint Shop.

Paint Gang-Boss

Paint Gang-Boss generally has experience as a Scenic Artist or Set Painter, and the same responsibilities as a Paint Foreman, however they manage smaller sets and locations, as assigned by the Key Scenic. Gang-bosses have a small crew of Set Painters to direct in the completion of any paint projects. If available, a Paint Utility Person will also be assigned to that set/location to assist with transportation of equipment/materials, set-up and clean up of the project site. The Gang-Boss is in contact with the Key Scenic regarding the particulars and progress of their set, and the Paint Shop Foreman regarding the replenishing of materials and transport of equipment.

On-Set Painter

On-Set Painters are present on set during filming. Requiring all the skills of a Set Painter, the On-Set must be capable of working efficiently and quickly to address the needs of the camera as instructed by the Director, Artistic Director.

The On-Set Painter should have their own kit of tools specifically for working on-set.

Set Painter

Painters in the film industry are responsible for carrying out many of the tasks associated with domestic painters, e.g., surface preparation, which involves using cleaning materials, stripping aids and fillers; and applying sealers, primers, undercoating and finishing materials with a brush or roller, or other appropriate applicator.

Set Painters are typically not present on set during filming.

Painters must adhere to strict Health and Safety guidelines, carry out their tasks in a safe work environment, and clean up and dispose of any waste in their work area.

Sign Painter/Writer

A Sign Painter is hired to execute a specialty project that falls within the craft of hand-lettering/sign painting. They work with the Key Scenic to identify the color selection, material, style and other parameters of the project.

They may be responsible for providing their own tools, and translating the Production Designer's vision into reality. Scenic Artists must ensure that their work is carried out to the agreed standards and deadlines.

Scenic Artist

Scenic Artists are hired to produce one or several scenic works for films, such as backdrops to be viewed out of a set window, to paint murals or paintings required on sets, and to touch-up or finish work undertaken by the Painting crew. They may be asked to paint complex prop pieces. Scenic Artists work with the Production Designer and/or the Key Painter identifying the color selection, material, style and other parameters of the project.

They may be responsible for providing their own tools, and translating the Production Designer's vision into reality. Scenic Artists must ensure that their work is carried out to the agreed standards and deadlines.

They must adhere to strict Health and Safety guidelines, carry out their tasks in a safe work environment, and clean up and dispose of any waste in their work area.

Sculptor

Sculptors are required to create intricate, impressive props and set pieces for the film industry. They may liaise with Production Designers, Visual Special Effects Directors, Props Masters, Construction Coordinator(s) and Key Scenic(s) regarding the work required.

Sculptors may be responsible for buying in the materials and tools required for the job. They work with a variety of materials such as polystyrene foams, resins, clay, metal or wood.

Plaster Foreman

The Plaster Foreman organizes manpower, equipment and materials for the various plaster projects on a production. The Plaster Foreman coordinates with the Key Scenic on project materials, scope and timeline, but may work with direct input from the Production Designer(s) and Construction Coordinator(s).

Plasterer

Plasterers carry out traditional plastering tasks, such as applying plaster to walls, ceilings and floors. However they are also responsible for creating a wide range of key structures and props used in films, ranging from preparing molds to working in fiberglass. Plasterers receive direction from the Plaster Foreman or the Key Scenic.

Plasterers are responsible for carrying out their work to the required deadlines and specifications.

They must also ensure that they adhere to strict Health and Safety guidelines, and carry out their tasks in a safe work environment, as many of the materials they handle are toxic and may be injurious to health.

Plaster Utility

Plaster Utility personnel are managed by the Plaster Foreman. They are responsible for cleaning equipment and maintaining order-in/restocking the plaster shop. Plaster Utility Personnel can be assigned to sets and locations to assist plaster crews with the transport of equipment, replenishing of materials, and set-up of a project space. Plaster Utility Personnel assist with the mixing and transport of materials to the Plasterers on a set or at a location. This position may also involve light prepping of project area/scenery for plaster treatments.

Paint Utility

Paint Utility personnel are managed by the Paint Foreman. They are responsible for cleaning equipment and maintaining order-in/restocking the paint shop. Paint Utility Personnel can be assigned to sets and locations to assist paint crews with the transport of equipment, replenishing of materials, and set-up of a project space. This position may also involve light prepping of project area/scenery for paint treatments.

On smaller productions, the Paint Utility may combine the tasks typically executed by a Plaster Utility.

Structure

The Key Scenic works with the Production Designer(s) and/or Construction Coordinator(s) identifying the paint processes needed for a set/location. The Key Scenic will then coordinate with the Construction Foreman of that set, and assign a Gang-Boss and crew of Set Painters. If a change in the direction, or a question arises regarding a paint project, it is delivered to the recipient's direct superior (ie: set painter to gang-boss, gang-boss to key scenic, etc.).

Things a first timer should know

Painters should be familiar with a board range of materials (latex and oil paints, stains, shellacs, tints, thinners, cleaners, etc.) as well as the tools necessary for their preparation, application and clean up. They should be aware of the Health and Safety guidelines applicable to a given material, and carry out their tasks in a manner that protects them, and maintains a safe work environment.

Painters should understand their position on a crew and be able to identify who their direct superior is regarding the chain of communication on any given project/set.

What Should a First Timer Bring?

A Painter's kit should include:

- Kit bag or other container, portable enough to move between the shop, sets, or on location.
- several sizes and styles of brushes, for priming and painting trim and walls, and finer brushes for details work and touch-ups.
- small hand tools, including but not limited to five-in-one, flat/philips head screw driver, putty knife, hammer, nail set, paint can key, blades (box-cutter, exacto blades, window scraper, etc.), measuring tape, notepad, pencils/sharpies, etc.
- Personal safety equipment, respirator for dust/chemical vapors, safety glassed/goggles, closed-toe shoes. Weather appropriate clothing on locations.

What Does the Department Do?

Often while carpenters are in the final stages of completing a set, the painters come in and begin to apply a series of surface treatments. These happen in several stages, usually broken down as follows: prepping/distressing > sealing/priming > painting/staining > aging.

What kind of unusual equipment is used?

Less common in domestic paint experience are the various spray guns (HVLP, Airless, Hudsons), plaster tools, carving tools, etc.

Department-Specific Language

To a certain extent, yes, such as brand names and model numbers and product names but painters are usually familiar with those and if they aren't, they catch on quickly.

What Is a Typical Day Like?

(This question is very similar to the above "What does the Department do? May want to combine, or remove this one, as a "typical day" in our industry is somewhat a misnomer.)

Painters arrive in the morning and are assigned to a project or set for a given duration of time. Any crew tasked to work on a location will be given a designated time of departure, and tasks attend to their kit preparation or other task until that time. A superior will check in to assess a painter's/crew's needs and progress on a project/set throughout the day. At the close of the day, all materials are cleaned up, properly labeled and safely stored. The amount of work remaining for the following day will be assessed, and planned for accordingly. Depending on the manpower/skills required on a set, painters may be removed from a project and placed on another.

Is There Anything Else People Should Know?

Social skills are vital work working well in this industry. A painter should be able to work independently on a project, as well as a member of a crew. Communication should at minimum be clear, respectful and professional at all times.

The aesthetic needs for a set may require a degree of experimentation with materials and application methods; a painter must be willing to work through a process of trial-and-error to achieve the desired effect. As such, a thorough understanding of materials and their governing properties is highly valuable to a painter.

Should a safety concern or questions arise, a painter should immediately ask for direction or help.