

## **Stranger Things: Locating design in science fiction and fantasy films**

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Inspired by the repeated deployment of designers and architects such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Carlo Bugatti in science fiction films like *Blade Runner* (1982), *Inception* (2010), *Alien Covenant* (2017), this session explores the interaction of histories of design and architecture with the genres of Science Fiction and Fantasy, within the expanded fields of film and television. Although these genres have long taken visual inspiration from the art world, this session looks beyond artistic influences to examine particular objects and spaces, which having not been designed specifically for film, are then used for the visual expression of fantastic narratives. Does the materiality of such objects express properties of 'the other', or convey subconscious narratives that help set the visual tone (such as discomfort, or anthropomorphism)? Can their use disrupt traditional narratives of time and space?

The papers in this session examine the work of specific designers, designs and design styles which frequently appear in science fiction and fantasy. The themes which will be explored are the referencing of the medieval *Hunt of the Unicorn* tapestries in the *Harry Potter* films, the corporate design futurism of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, deployment of contemporary jewellery in Sci-Fi films such as *Star Wars* and *Barbarella*, as well as the inspiration taken from the architecture and design of Frank Lloyd Wright by film production designer Guy Hendrix Dyas.

## **Immobilis in Mobile: Harry Potter's Unicorn Tapestries and the Role of Tapestry in Fantasy Films**

*Xavier Dectot* (National Museums Scotland)

When Harry Potter enters the Gryffindor common room in the film version of *The Philosopher's Stone*, the first thing the new students (and the spectators) see is the Lady and the Unicorn tapestry spreading across the walls. Up to then, true to the book, these young people had mostly been confronted to paintings, which cover the walls of the stairwell (including, and ending with, the Fat Lady). To the modern viewer, though, the tapestries, whilst absent from the book, play an essential (and recurring) role in setting the alternative medieval ambience that dominates the franchise. In fact, as if in response, when the viewer, in the following episode, *The Chamber of Secrets*, is introduced in the Slytherin common room, they are confronted to the much gloomier Killing of the Unicorn, the sixth tapestry from the Metropolitan's *Hunt of the Unicorn* series. Tapestries often play an essential, although

discreet, role in establishing not only the ambience of a room but, often, more widely, the feel of a film, from and the Diane tapestry series in *Thunderball* to the Bayeux Tapestry in *Shrek the Third* (and many others). This paper aims to explore how, through their sheer physical dimensions, their specific materiality and their essential narrativity, tapestries not only encases the scenic action, but it often give it an additional depth. In fact, as the aforementioned Harry Potter scene demonstrates, they are often the mean through which the viewer is made to accept the alternate reality of the Fantasy world

### **'just-enough otherness': The Use of Frank Lloyd Wright's Work in *Inception* and *Passengers***

*Ersi Ioannidou (Kingston School of Art, Kingston University)*

Production designer Guy Hendrix Dyas observed that spaceships in film are aesthetically coherent. And, in the name of originality, in *Passengers* (2016) he decided on plurality and disjunction. Dyas drew from a rich compendium of references outside the science fiction genre. Key sources of inspiration were Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese architecture – which Dyas also used as references for the sets of *Inception* (2010). Dyas explains, 'These are wonderful styles of architecture ...lend themselves very well when you are trying to tell a story that is of a futuristic nature, and you want to immerse the audience in something that looks futuristic, but perhaps not so outlandish that you're taken out of the film.' Dyas does not elaborate on how he used Wright's work in the interiors of *Passengers*; but his quote suggests that Wright has become one of the go-to architect when a set designer would like to produce 'just-enough otherness'. Fellow production designers of science fiction films seem to agree; *THX1138* (1971), *Gattaca* (1997) and, most famously, *Blade Runner* (1982) use buildings by Wright to locate the plot in the not-so-distant future. Abstraction, monumentality, repetition of forms and patterns, geometric austerity together with references to 'exotic' civilizations remove Wright's buildings from their historic context and create a sense of timelessness. This paper discusses the 'just-enough otherness' that Wright's work brings to science fiction sets focusing on its use by Dyas in *Passengers* and *Inception*.

### **Jewellery in Space; Its Influence, and Inspiration, within Sci-Fi Cinematography**

*Sarah Rothwell (National Museums Scotland)*

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, a Princess wore a necklace that became so iconic, that the very Earthly design was renamed Planetoid Valley's. This was not merely a prop, or "costume jewellery", nor the necklace that was designed for her; but was bought from the London store of Lapponia, a Finnish jewellery house, whose head of design Björn

Weckström had created revolutionary designs since the 1950's, that was inspired by the natural environment of the Nordic landscape, and unlike anything that anyone had seen before.

From cult classic *Barbarella* where Jane Fonda is seen wearing a wonderful sinus organic bracelet designed by Paco Rabanne; to the aforementioned necklace gracing the neck of Carrie Fisher's Princess Leia in *Star Wars: New Hope*, contemporary jewellery design of the day has often been used to evoke a feeling of the future, or create an illusion of an alien or alternative universe within Science Fiction cinematography and television production.

This paper looks to highlight those jewels which have become iconic within the Sci-fi community, pieces that sometimes were not commissioned specifically, but were to be found within the studios of the emerging new wave jewellery designers from the late 1950's onwards. And how their experimentation with new materials and techniques, and influenced by a wide range of subjects from the natural environment, artistic movements of the day, to archaeology and ethnography, led them to create these 'otherworldly' jewels.

### **Roundtable Discussion: Retrofuturism: Design History meets Science Fiction**