



## Cinematic deco: Implementing art deco in movie set design

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### Abstract

"Capturing Elegance: Art Deco Design's lasting impact on modern spaces and movie sets" This dissertation explores the fascinating world of Art Deco design, following its development and influence on various artistic mediums, including architecture, furniture, and painting. This paper examines the lavish and glamorous environments designed in America and Europe during the Art Deco era. It also emphasizes how the movement influenced Hollywood set design and shaped public consumption habits and preferences. The study, which focuses on the importance of production design in motion pictures, demonstrates how "The Great Gatsby" skillfully conveyed the Art Deco style, taking viewers back to the 1920s and highlighting the contrast between new and old money.

The dissertation also highlights how Art Deco's style is still relevant in modern architecture and interior design, as demonstrated by these examples. This paper provides a compelling exploration of the long-lasting impact of Art Deco on movie sets and its ongoing influence in shaping contemporary spaces through in-depth case studies and historical analysis.

**Keywords:** Art deco, movie sets, interior design, 1920's

### 1. Introduction

The fields of interior design, architecture, and art have all been profoundly impacted by the Art Deco design movement. This dissertation attempts to investigate the history of the Art Deco movement, following its inception, development, and continuing influence on a range of artistic mediums, with a focus on Hollywood set design and modern environments. The Art Deco movement transformed the aesthetics of lavish, glitzy spaces and geometric designs in buildings and movie sets. It originated in America and Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. This essay aims to explore the traits, background, and cultural effects of Art Deco, highlighting its importance in influencing societal norms and consumer preferences.

The Art Deco movement reflected the advances in technology and societal shifts of the time with its emphasis on geometric shapes, luxury, and modernity. The movement had an impact on furniture, film production design, architecture, and other non-traditional art forms. The dissertation seeks to present a thorough examination of Art Deco's influence on Hollywood set design, emphasizing how it shaped societal consumption habits and preferences. The elaborately detailed sets of this era captured the

grandeur and sophistication of the Art Deco movement, and they had a significant influence on the ideas and opinions of the general public.

The study also seeks to highlight the significance of production design in films, specifically in terms of encapsulating historical periods and societal themes. The emphasis on "The Great Gatsby" 's production design provides an engaging case study, demonstrating how the movie skillfully conveys the contrast between new and old money and the Art Deco style of the 1920s. Production designers are commended for their painstaking attention to detail and historical accuracy, which are used to bring the past to life on screen and envelop viewers in the aesthetic of the Art Deco movement and the era of the 1920s.

Apart from examining its influence on film sets, the dissertation endeavors to investigate the lasting significance of Art Deco in modern design, as demonstrated by the application of its aesthetic in contemporary architecture and interior design. Gawky Goose and 1Q1 Kitchen and Bar in Bangalore are two examples of places that bear witness to the Art Deco movement's enduring influence on design practices and how it continues to shape contemporary spaces.

## 2. Literature review

**“The Great Gatsby:** “Academics have been interested in the significance of production design in movies, especially when it comes to historical dramas. Egan's analysis of Baz Luhrmann's 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby's* production design highlights the value of precise and imaginative production design in immersing viewers in a different era. The study examines how production design reflected the Art Deco style and the portrayal of characters in the movie, concluding that accurate and imaginative production design is crucial to a film's success. This is consistent with the findings of Bergfelder, Harris, and Street (2007), who point out that studios and art departments have set up research departments to guarantee precise details, using resources like books, architectural magazines, art libraries, and photos to produce faultless sets. Production designer Catherine Martin of *The Great Gatsby* emphasizes that this attention to detail affects not only the audience but also the actors' legitimacy and level of success.

A common theme in the literature is the function of production design in building an immersive world and improving the storytelling experience. In his discussion of the harmony between authenticity and exaggeration, Heisner emphasizes how exaggeration can produce a thrilling and profoundly moving cinematic experience. *The Great Gatsby* is a prime example of this inventive use of production design, as style, period, and character representation are all exaggerated to highlight the setting and build tension. The article highlighting the significance of production design in the movie and how set decorator Catherine Martin succeeded in bringing the characters and setting of the book to life highlights the ability of film design to immerse viewers in various eras and socioeconomic situations while providing the ultimate cinematic experience.

The literature review highlights the diverse function of production design in movies, especially historical dramas. It emphasizes the value of realism, inventiveness, and the capacity to immerse viewers in various times and places, as well as the influence of production design on character development and narrative. The case study of *The Great Gatsby* serves as an excellent example of how important production design is in producing an emotionally and visually engaging cinematic experience. The story must be brought to life on screen with meticulous attention to historical detail and imaginative set decorations that breathe new life into the past.

## 3. Case study

### 3.1 The Great Gatsby

- Using Baz Luhrmann's 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* as a case study, the paper explores the importance of production design in movies.
- It highlights how important precise and imaginative production design is to a movie's success, especially when it comes to portraying the Art Deco aesthetic and the characters in *The Great Gatsby*.
- The study explores the history of production design and highlights important aspects of it as they relate to *The Great Gatsby*, such as the portrayal of the era and the emphasis on Art Deco style.
- The article emphasizes how well the novel's characters and historical setting are portrayed through set

decoration, paying particular attention to how new money is portrayed in contrast to old money and how hollow the upper class is perceived to be.

- It emphasizes the attention to historical accuracy and the imaginative additions to set decoration that revitalize the past, acknowledging the importance of production design in bringing the story to life on screen.

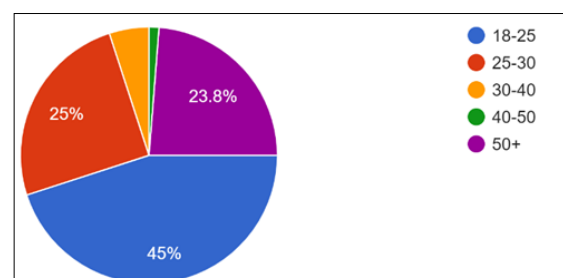
The list of references for the set designs of Nick Carraway's house and living room, Wilson's garage, Myrtle's apartment, Gatsby's mansion, extravagant parties, the master bedroom, Wilson's garage, and the Buchanan house is also included in the paper.

### 3.2 From instruction to consumption: Architecture and design in Hollywood movies of the 1930

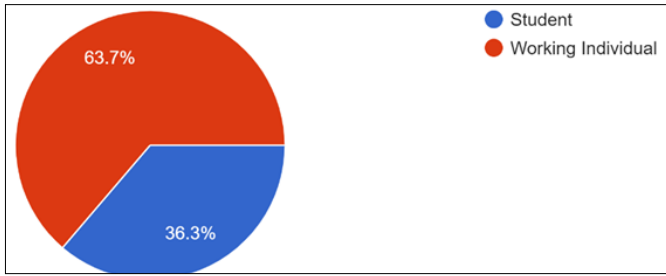
- With an emphasis on the influence of architecture and design in Hollywood films, the paper explores the significant role that movie sets had in influencing trends and motivating Americans in the 1930s.
- It emphasizes the transition towards authenticity and believability by tracing the development of set design from its theatrical beginnings to more realistic representations of spaces.
- Examined are the various visual aesthetics of various film studios as well as the impact of art directors on set design, suggesting their important role in determining the aesthetics of the films of the time.
- There are specific instances of iconic sets—like those in “*The Purple Rose of Cairo*” and “*Dinner at Eight*”—that highlight their impact on societal consumption habits and preferences.
- The use of modernist and Art Deco furnishings in film sets, like those for “*Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise*” and “*Trouble in Paradise*,” is also covered in the paper, as is the effect of lighting advancements on on-screen imagery.
- It highlights the ability of film sets to set trends and motivate millions of Americans by serving as visual symbols of social messages and developing into characters that aided in the advancement of the representation of American culture.

**3.3 Hollywood Architecture and Design:** From Education to Consumption 1930s motion pictures Not content to confine himself to a single stylistic vocabulary, Cedric Gibbons combined “modernistic” (Art Deco) and “functionalist” (modernist) décor in his sets for *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise* (1931).

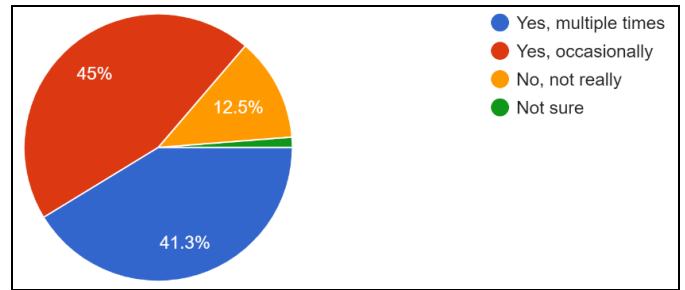
### 3.4 Surveys and results



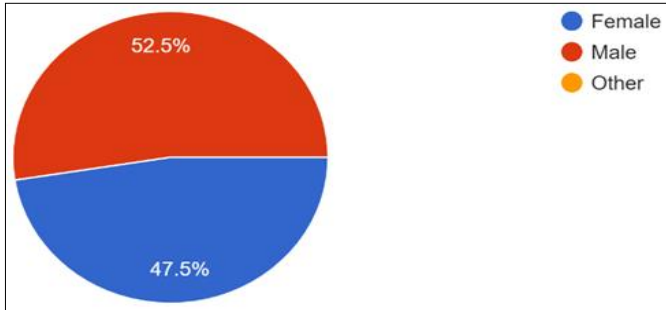
**Fig 1:** Age 80 responses



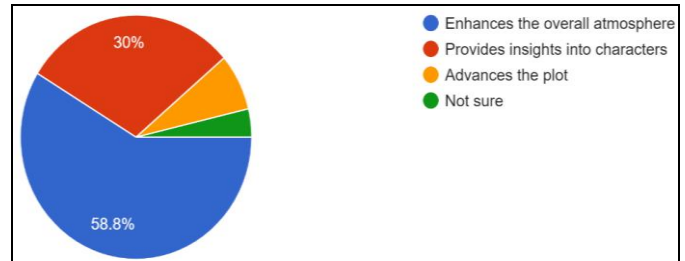
**Fig 2:** Occupation 80 responses



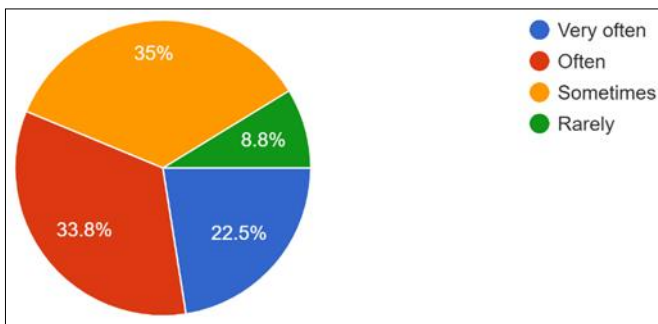
**Fig 7:** Have you been impressed by a movie solely because of its set design?



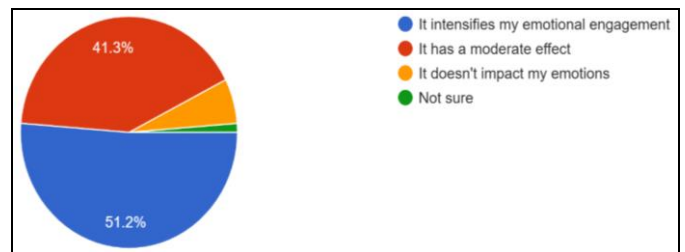
**Fig 3:** Gender 80 responses



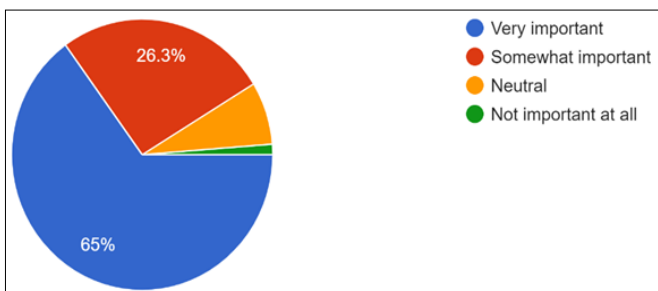
**Fig 8:** In your opinion, how does a well-designed movie set contribute to storytelling?



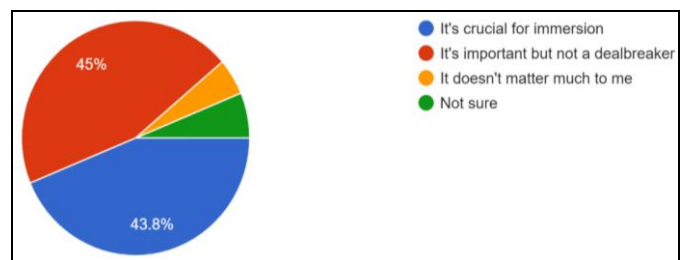
**Fig 4:** How often do you watch movies? 80 responses



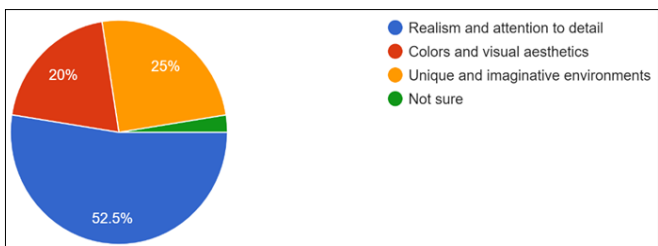
**Fig 9:** How does set design impact your emotion connection to a movie?



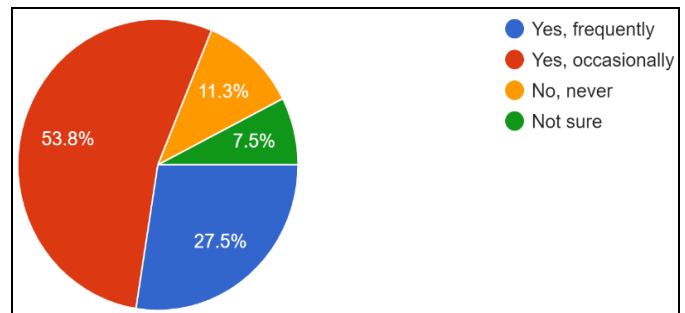
**Fig 5:** How important do you think set design is to your overall enjoyment of a movie?



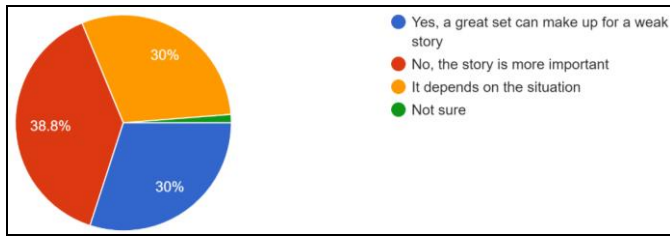
**Fig 10:** What role does consistency in set design play in your movie-watching experience?



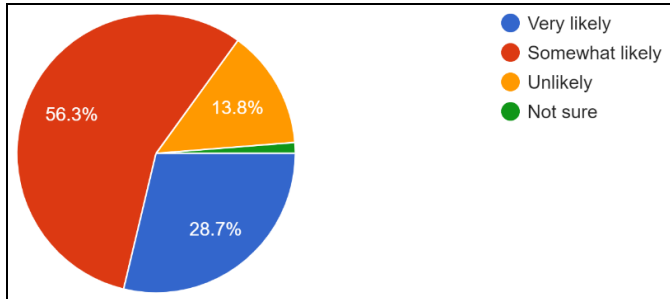
**Fig 6:** Which aspect of set design do you believe has the most impact on your movie-watching experiences? 80 responses



**Fig 11:** Have you ever been inspired by a movie's set design in your personal life (e.g., home decor choices)?



**Fig 12:** Do you believe that a visually stunning set can compensate for a weak storyline?



**Fig 13:** How likely are you to recommend a movie solely based on its set design?

- Q1. 28/80 (35%) have said they watch movies occasionally.
- Q2. 52/80 (65%) have voted that a set design is important to the overall enjoyment of a movie
- Q3. 42/80 (52.5%) believe realism and attention to detail have the most impact on movie-watching experience.
- Q4. 36/80 (45%) have said to be occasionally impressed by a movie solely based on its set design.
- Q5. 47/80 (58.8%) believe a well-designed movie set contributes to enhancing the overall atmosphere.
- Q6. 41/80 (51.2%) believe a good set design intensifies emotional engagement.
- Q7. 36/80 (45%) believe that consistency in set design is important but not a dealbreaker.
- Q8. 43/80 (53.8%) have said they have occasionally been inspired by a movie set design in their personal lives.
- Q9. 31/80 (38.8%) have said a visually stunning set does not compensate for a weak storyline which is contradictory in nature.
- Q10. 46/80 (56.3%) have said they are somewhat likely to recommend a movie solely based on its set design.

**Inferences and conclusion**

The dissertation offers an in-depth analysis of the Art Deco style’s influence on movie sets, demonstrating how it developed and how it affected design in the 1920’s and the 1930’s. The case studies, in particular the analysis of sets from movies like "The Great Gatsby" and "Our Dancing Daughters," demonstrate how important Art Deco was in influencing how historical periods, characters, and settings were portrayed visually. The enduring influence of Art Deco design in creating visually immersive and historically accurate environments for storytelling is demonstrated by the painstaking attention to detail, the incorporation of Art Deco elements, and the portrayal of opulence and modernity in movie sets.

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