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COSTUME DESIGN

From Superman's cape to Dorothy's slippers, costumes can be as identifiable with a character as the actor who played the part. Like many jobs in the arts, costume designers have a variety of educational backgrounds, and no specific degree or credentials are required. That being said, there are many undergraduate and MFA programs offered in costume design that many aspiring designer choose to pursue. In addition to providing technical training, many graduate programs include design opportunities in local theatre and can help build connections within the industry.

Costumes reflect our personality. The term costume can refer to wardrobe and dress in general, or to the distinctive style of dress of a particular people, class, or period. When we talk about costumes, it has three P's attached to it, People, Place and Period.

One of the more prominent places people see costumes is in theatre, film and on television. In combination with other aspects, theatrical costumes help actors portray characters' age, gender, role, profession, social class, personality, and even information about the historical period, era, geographic location and time of day, as well as the season or weather of the theatrical performance. These are representational costumes. Costume Design is one of the important building blocks in the film or theatre, be it in any country. Costumes help to portray a character to an audience and thus, needs to be authentic and well-suited to the actor playing the role.

Through review of literature, it is also seen that there is an emerging scenario of commodity consumption in costuming industry in films television which includes use of brands and their products to add value to the scene. It may not be authentic in portrayal of the characters and questions the traditional costuming industry set up. It is therefore imperative to develop a well-coordinated and useful model of the future costuming industry which is resourceful and progressive and in nature.

What Is a Costume Designer?

A costume designer is the individual in charge of designing the clothing elements worn by actors in a film or stage production. Costume Designers possess a similar skill set to that of traditional fashion designers but must also satisfy the unique demands of designing clothes for theatre or film.

What Are the Roles and Responsibilities of a Costume Designer?

Costume designers start their process by doing a close reading of the script and making a careful analysis of the plot, tone, and period of the story being told.

After preliminary conversations with the writer, director and other members of the production team, the costume designer will begin researching the fashion history and trends of the relevant time period and location.

During this process they'll compile a collection of visual references for specific materials, patterns or clothing pieces that they wish to draw on in devising their own final designs.

In assembling the costumes, the designer must ensure that each outfit effectively communicates the age, social status and dramatic function of each character, bearing in mind that this can change over the course of a narrative. Each individual costume design is compiled into what's called a costume plot which tracks each character chronologically through the story and documents their changes in attire. Plots are generally made up of hand-drawn sketches, photographs or digital renderings.

Once the director and production team have signed off on the costumes, the designer gets to work putting them together. Sometimes costumes are constructed from scratch, but oftentimes pieces may be purchased from retailers.

Most costumes are then altered after fittings with the cast.

What Skills Do You Need to Be a Costume Designer?

Passion for design. A costume designer must have a deep knowledge and appreciation of clothing and fashion across history and locale. Before the designer begins devising their designs, they must spend a great deal of time researching and compiling reference materials. Artistic ability. Costume designers must also possess the ability to draw freehand and oftentimes with computer aids. The blueprint for every costume is generally a hand-drawn sketch that the designer creates and is seen as an essential skill for costume designers.

Software capabilities. That being said, more and more costume designers are now integrating

computer design programs into their process and many mock-ups are now produced digitally. Rudimentary construction knowledge. While not all costume designers have full proficiency in sewing or tailoring, all must have a basic knowledge of the technical process through which clothing is constructed. Whether or not they are directly involved in the production of their costumes, they will be working closely with sewing and alteration professionals and must be able to communicate their design needs effectively.

