

AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Discipline Head, Production Design
DEPARTMENT: AFI Conservatory
LOCATION: Los Angeles Campus

ABOUT THE AFI CONSERVATORY

The AFI Conservatory is the graduate-level training program of the American Film Institute (AFI), dedicated to developing the next generation of narrative filmmakers. Established in 1969, the Conservatory is located on an 8-acre campus in the Hollywood Hills, overlooking the city of Los Angeles.

The program follows an immersive, hands-on, production-focused model and offers specialized training in six disciplines: Cinematography, Directing, Editing, Producing, Production Design, and Screenwriting.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

The ideal candidate is an accomplished production designer with a distinguished record of professional credits, a deep understanding of design for film and television, and the ability to mentor emerging artists in developing the conceptual, technical, and collaborative skills essential for success in today's rapidly evolving production landscape.

The position is a full-time, 12-month appointment, based in Los Angeles and plays a vital role in advancing the mission of the AFI Conservatory: to train visionary filmmakers, uphold artistic excellence, and prepare AFI students ("Fellows") to lead the future of storytelling across film, television, and emerging media.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Discipline Head, Production Design is a senior academic and creative leader responsible for shaping the vision, curriculum, and strategic direction of the Production Design discipline at the AFI Conservatory. Reporting directly to the Dean, the Discipline Head guides a department (or "discipline") of working industry professionals responsible for training Production Design Fellows. The role ensures the discipline remains aligned with industry practices by integrating emerging technologies, artistic trends, and innovative methodologies – from traditional set design to virtual production and AI-assisted visualization tools – while upholding AFI's longstanding commitment to storytelling excellence. The Discipline Head plays a critical role in mentoring Fellows toward successful careers, aligning curriculum with contemporary professional standards, and fostering a culture of inclusion, innovation, and cross-disciplinary collaboration across the Conservatory.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES:

Creative & Educational Leadership

- Provide visionary leadership for the Production Design discipline, ensuring Fellows gain mastery of the creative, technical, and collaborative dimensions of design for film, television, and emerging media.
- Guide Fellows through the full production design process - from concept development and visual research through pre-production planning, production execution, and post-production collaboration.
- Oversee the recruitment, development, and evaluation of Production Design faculty, ensuring teaching aligns with AFI's high artistic and professional standards.
- Manage resource allocation, strategic planning, and budgetary decisions in collaboration with administration.
- Advance the development of the Production Design curriculum to reflect emerging market demands, technological innovations, practices in design visualization, virtual production, sustainability, and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Ensure the curriculum remains aligned with current market demands and industry best practices .
- Foster a wide range of voices, perspectives, and culturally informed approaches in visual storytelling and production design, cultivating an inclusive and globally aware creative environment.
- Teach at least one class per semester and provide meaningful mentorship, assessment, and guidance throughout each Fellow's academic progression.
- Oversee Production Design participation, as well as design portfolio development, ensuring Fellows demonstrate professional-level design execution and storytelling insight.
- Actively support New Fellow recruitment efforts and lead the discipline's admissions process.

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

- Partner with the Heads of Directing, Producing, Screenwriting, Cinematography, and Editing to ensure cohesive, industry-aligned training across the Conservatory.
- Strengthen production and post-production workflows that highlight the Designer's essential role in visual storytelling, sound integration, and the collaborative creative process.
- Contribute to Conservatory-wide initiatives that support curriculum alignment, thesis evaluation, and integrated learning experiences for Fellows.

Innovation and Emerging Technologies

- Lead the integration of emerging tools and workflows into the design curriculum, including virtual art departments (VAD), real-time rendering engines (Unreal Engine, Unity), 3D modeling, and other visualization platforms.
- Serve as a strategic thought partner to AFI in the ethical, artistic, and pedagogical application of Artificial Intelligence and emerging technology – reinforcing AFI's philosophy that the artist's vision must always guide the tool.
- Provide guidance and training for Fellows and faculty on responsible technology use, creative exploration, and essential intellectual property considerations.

- Maintain up to date knowledge of evolving technologies to ensure AFI remains a leader in innovation, creative practice, and technological literacy.

Industry Engagement and Professional Development

- Leverage professional experience and industry relationships to support recruitment efforts and connect Fellows with internships, shadowing opportunities, and aligned career pathways.
- Build and sustain partnerships with guilds, studios, agencies, and streaming platforms to expand Fellow access, visibility, and career readiness.
- Collaborate with the Dean, Institutional Advancement, and external partners to strengthen AFI's industry presence and steward relationships that advance the Conservatory's mission.
- Develop and deliver external outreach and networking events – including showcases, recruitment workshops, and other industry engagement opportunities – that strengthen professional visibility and connections for Fellows.
- Engage established alumni designers as mentors, guest speakers, and networking resources to enrich the Fellows experience and foster a thriving professional community.

Inclusive Storytelling

- Champion a learning environment that celebrates diverse voices, cultural perspectives, and inclusive representation across the production design discipline.
- Expose Fellows to a broad spectrum of storytelling traditions, creative approaches, and narrative workflows that reflect the richness and diversity of the global entertainment landscape.

Additional duties as may be assigned.

EXPERIENCE/SKILLS REQUIRED:

- Bachelor's degree in production design or related field required; MFA preferred.
- Extensive professional experience as a production designer or art director, with significant credits in film, television, or related media.
- Demonstrated leadership experience supervising creative teams or managing academic programs.
- Graduate-level teaching experience or experience in professional training environment preferred.
- Recognition by peers or industry organizations for excellence in production design preferred.
- Active engagement in film and television production, supported by a robust network of Industry peers and partners.
- Comprehensive knowledge of traditional or digital design methodologies, including set design, art direction, visualization tools, and virtual production pipeline.
- Strong analytical, strategic, and creative problem-solving abilities, with the capacity to navigate complex and evolving challenges.
- Demonstrated ability to build and maintain effective working relationships with staff, faculty, and external stakeholders.

- Experience managing resources, personnel, and operational functions in academic or professional environments.
- Proficiency in contemporary design and visualization software, including SketchUp, Rhino, Blender, Unreal Engine, and the Adobe Creative Suite.
- Familiarity with sustainable, global, and industry-aligned production design practices.
- Demonstrated commitment to collaboration, supporting developing filmmakers, and creative excellence in both academic and professional environments.
- Friendly, collaborative, and service-oriented demeanor with a strong commitment to supporting faculty, Fellows and visiting artists.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain confidential information and properly handle employment and / or education records.
- High degree of personal integrity with the proven ability to inspire trust, confidence, and professionalism across all stakeholders.
- Established record of mentoring emerging filmmakers, fostering creative development, and supporting professional readiness.
- Established track record of innovative design work across various formats, platforms, and production environments.
- Comprehensive understanding of contemporary production design methodologies, workflows, and industry business practices.

SALARY RANGE - \$120,000 - \$140,000 annually

Review of applications will commence on Monday, March 9th.

The position will remain open until filled.