

SBTD GUIDE: BECOMING AN ASSISTANT DESIGNER



Becoming an assistant designer is not for everyone but for those with a strong range of the skills below it can prove to be an invaluable way of entering the profession, allowing you to earn money and gain experience of working on productions that are likely to be larger in scale and / or greater in than projects you might be commissioned to design yourself.

Through this process you are likely to gain a broad range of contacts and be recommended to others either as an assistant or as a designer in your own right.

Being on the register does not replace directly contacting designers you are interested in working with. Be persistent and patient. Designers might not always know they need help at the start of a job or the assistant they regularly work with may not be available. If they have heard from you regularly through going to see their work or to tell them what you are up to, it is much more likely that your cv might make it to the top of their pile.

Designers really need to be able to trust their assistants – sometimes you might be representing them at meetings, so it is really important to them that you have an affinity with their working methods and the aesthetics of their work.

Working with Designers

To create this guide and to relaunch the Assistant Designers Register on our website, we consulted with a number of established designers.

They all agreed that the most important skills of all were very good communication skills and the ability to work to a deadline.

Remember that you are likely to be working with established designers in this role because they themselves are dealing with deadlines, often combining a number of projects, so being calm and good humoured are also key.

Identifying Skill Levels

When registering, you should tick a skill if you have experience of it in your training or professional work and are confident using a software or performing the skill unaided. If you are contacted, we recommend being open and honest with the designer about your skill level. The need for a specific level or competence will vary from show to show and designer to designer. Sharing images of previous work will be a really effective way to show your level and start the conversation. We encourage being as open as possible, without doing yourself down.

Where you are available to work

We are often asked for recommendations of assistants based outside London. If you are willing to travel to London to assist, please bear in mind how this will impact on what you earn.

When working from a base outside London, consider how far you are prepared to travel on a daily basis, bearing in mind that hours of work may vary and run in to the evening.

Please do register in more than one region eg. East Midlands and West Midlands if you think being available for work in both is feasible.

[Should you decide to join us, this is the information we will ask you to provide for the Assistant Designers Register;](#)

- An honest description of your experience and skills, including any designers you have worked for. The need for a specific level or competence will vary from show to show and designer to designer. We encourage being as open as possible, without doing yourself down. (200 words)
- Where did you Training?
- Date of graduation?
- Geographical locations where you are available for work.

Sharing images of previous work will be a really effective way to show your level of experience and start the conversation. In the second section you can upload example images of your work that will appear in a carousel on your Assistant Designer page. These can be photos of model pieces, whole models or images of technical drawings.

Below are the categories and skills you can select. These skills are searchable on the list by prospective employers;

Model Making

1:25 model making
 1:50 model making
 Soldering
 Mould making and casting
 Figure making
 Sculpting
 Painting
 Creating surfaces and textures
 3D Printing

Technical Drawing Skills and CAD Programmes

Drafting by hand
 Vectorworks 2D
 Vectorworks 3D
 AutoCAD 2D
 AutoCAD 3D
 SketchUp
 SketchUp-Pro, Layout

BricsCAD
QCAD-Pro
Draftsight
Turbocad

Other Computer Software Design Skill

Photoshop
Illustrator
InDesign
Rhino
Cinema 4D
3D Studio Max
Solidworks
Blender
Video Editing
Animation
3D Printing

Research/Sourcing Skills

Period knowledge of costume set and props
Basic knowledge of construction methods and materials
Ability to put together digital mood boards
Prop and costume sourcing
Knowledge of prop houses, hire shops, local knowledge of shops
Ability to keep track of petty cash

Costume Practical Skills

Hand sewing skills
Costume Machine sewing skills
Pattern cutting
Costume fitting/alteration
Knowledge of fabrics and their properties
Distressing and Dying

Set and Prop Practical Skills

Paper prop creation
Ability to use workshop machinery
Scenic Art skills
Hand sewing skills
Prop Machine sewing skills
Carpentry
Metal work
Welding

Puppetry

Sewing / soft fabrication
Wood carving / wood work
Poly / Foam carving
Plasterzote / Pattern making
Junk puppet making
Puppetry performance skills
Object manipulation skills
Large scale willow / lantern puppet making
Mechanical puppet making

Experience in different types of performance

Plays
Musicals
Opera
Dance
Devised
Site Specific
Physical Theatre
Community based
Theatre for young audiences
Puppetry
Circus

Other Skills

Second Language
Driving Car/Van

Here is an example of an entry;

<https://www.theatredesign.org.uk/author/allywhitehead/>

You can join the Assistant Designers Register as a New Professional or Professional Member of SBTD.

<http://www.theatredesign.org.uk/membership/join-the-sbtd/>

[We look forward to welcoming you.](#)

If you have any questions, please get in touch via our administrator:

admin@theatredesign.org.uk