

smaller, with a lower than normal ceiling height—even if a ceiling is only implied and never seen.

A background such as a flat with a graduated tonal shading can be used to emphasize or de-emphasize actors or our centre of focus within the frame. It thus becomes a visual tool that can be instrumental in creating the correct mood called for in the script.

One should always be mindful of the fact that shading, like any technique when used properly, creates a sense of realism; but when used in a haphazard or unthinking fashion, it can create more problems than it solves.

Temporal shading is a technique which employs variations of light to create visual points of interest within a scene. It is not a random splashing of light intensities, but rather a means of heightening the reality of a set.

Two prime examples are a day interior and a night interior. The day interior would rightly show the wall where the window would be darker in tone and shade than the walls that are washed by the light from the window. The night interior would employ light sources that appear to be practicals—the source of illumination within the frame. To create a convincing effect such as with a wall sconce, the intensity of the light should fall off as the light falling on the wall is

further away from the light source. These associations provide us with a mental visual reference key to the light source within the frame and indeed with the room.

A secondary problem that crops up from time to time is the difficulty of adequately lighting backdrops which include scenic elements intended to create a visual reference to that which is outside of a window in a set. Staging scenic elements such as a backdrop too close to the rear of flattage creates two problems: 1) it is difficult, if not impossible, to light convincingly; and 2) the close proximity of the backdrop will bring it into sharp focus if action is staged too close to it, thus revealing the deceit and ruining the illusion of reality. A minimum of six feet between a backdrop and flat material is preferred to produce satisfactory pictorial results.

Set Dressing

Set dressing is made up of three elements: 1) furniture; 2) properties, e.g., framed pictures, pottery, plants, knick-knacks; 3) practical lamps or other light sources.

Each of these elements is combined in a setting to create a sense of reality that mimics a true life setting. These elements, singularly or in combination, can present problems for the lighting director if they

are not selected and placed with care and consideration for the mechanics of staging.

• **Furniture** is often the greatest offender when it comes to staging difficulties regarding set dressings. Producers sometimes choose chairs that are unsuitable for television purposes for a number of reasons. Chairs that swivel, are too high, too low, or chairs of mis-matched heights, present their own set of challenges.

□ Chairs that swivel permit performers to turn into and out of their own key light—as well as presenting the visually annoying picture of having someone moving from side to side within the frame. This most often happens on talk shows, when the guests are nervous.

□ In dramatic presentations, chairs that swivel aren't the problem—it is usually chairs that are too deep. Hi-backed wing chairs are a prime example; the high back and the wings make it very difficult to light a subject in the traditional manner. Modifications in technique must be made so as not to cast the shadow of the chair on the subject. This type of chair also makes shooting difficult, as the chairs have to be arranged so that they face out and away from each other to facilitate ease of shooting.

□ Chairs or stools of mismatched heights can also present a problem. Mismatched heights in an interview situation force one