

**DESIGN IN CINEMA: THE ROLE OF OBJECTS WITHIN  
THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION OF CHARACTER  
THROUGH PRODUCTION DESIGN**

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# **DESIGN IN CINEMA: THE ROLE OF OBJECTS WITHIN THE PROCESS OF VISUALIZATION OF CHARACTER AND SPACE THROUGH PRODUCTION DESIGN**

## **SUMMARY**

The aim of this study is to outline the role, responsibilities and the process of design discipline in the realm cinema in general and to analyze the role of product design at the process of production design in particular. The thesis frames the account of production design process at the production stage with an overall structure; followed by an investigation of product's position within this framework in order to discover the contribution of product within the overall film meaning.

Few researches restricted to set design and direction of photography, produces the need to investigate product design's role in the visual narrative of film production. Therefore, this study will observe product design's role in film production with a focus on the visual establishment of character, setting and cultural background.

An investigation of the direct interaction of product design and social individual as well as the setting as a descriptive agent in communicating the film narrative with the audience is made, followed by the production design analysis in the feature film *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999)

**Keywords:** Product Design, Cinema, Production Design, Personality Visualization, Semiotics.

## **SİNEMA VE TASARIM:YAPIM TASARIMINDA MEKÂN VE KARAKTER GÖRSELLEŞTİRME SÜRECİNDE NESNENİN ROLÜ**

### **ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın ortaya koyulma amacı genel bağlamda sinema alanını özel bağlamda ise Hollywood sinemasında gelişmiş bir organizasyon olarak yer bulan yapım tasarımı departmanını ürün tasarımı perspektifi ile incelemektir. Ürün tasarımı disiplini içinde bulunan kimlik, tüketici, ürün- kimlik ilişkisi gibi kavramların kurgusal bir metni görselleştirmede oynadığı rol ortaya koymak birincil hedeftir.

Bu bağlamda film imgesinin yaratım sürecinde ürün tasarımı ve nesnelerin bu imge bütünde kapsadığı yer araştırılacaktır. Çalışma, genel hatlarıyla Film yapımının ilk aşamasında yer alan Yapım Tasarımı bölümünün görevlerini çalışma prensipleri ve yapısını ortaya koyduktan sonra bu çerçevede ürünün konumlandığı noktayı ortaya çıkararak sinema anlatısında oluşturulan anlam bütününde aldığı rolü Hollywood Sineması dâhilinde araştırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Film Çalışmaları alanında sahne tasarımı ve görüntü yönetimi alanının, tasarım çalışmaları alanında ise mimari bağlamın ağırlıkla çalışılması, ürün tasarımının sinemasal anlatımdaki yerinin araştırılması gereğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma salt ürün tasarımı üzerine odaklanmakta, genel çerçeveyi ortaya çıkarma ertesinde ürün tasarımı ve nesnenin karakter, çevre ve kültürel kurguyu görselleştirmede anlatı ve izleyici ile kurduğu etkileşimi sorgulamaktadır.

Karakter ve çevre kavramlarının ürün tasarımı ile olan direk ilişkisinin, ürün ve nesnelerde varolan kodlar sayesinde izleyiciye aktarılmasında ana öge olarak göze çarpan sinemasal karakter ve sinemasal çevre kavramlarıyla arasındaki bağ sorgulanarak, 1999 yapımı Fight Club isimli sinema filminin tasarım öğeleri analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ürün Tasarımı, Sinema, Yapım Tasarımı, Karakter, Görselleştirme, Göstergebilim.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Problem Definition:**

Film research as an academic field is one of the major subcategories of visual culture studies. It is a dynamic and constantly developing story telling agent which addresses auditory and visual perception. The structure of film with its progress along the time it occupies, the audience which it directly addresses, the unique mannerism of its director, its main apparatus, its ideology, its existence as commodity and with its marketing value the phenomenon of the seventh art is widely studied. Within such a vast research there is surprisingly less study about design, production design in particular as one of the central elements of the unity of film, and as one of the tools to visualize a screenplay to be recorded by camera. In various personal contacts with scholars who have directed their interest towards the field of production design, the response was similar; the resources of the area are particularly limited.

Not unexpectedly, given the neglect of art direction, décor has received scant attention within a larger discussion of film theory. In fact, in the past half century, considerations on the aesthetics of set design have been advanced by just a handful of practitioners and by even fewer critics and scholars (Affron and Affron ,1995).

It's not entirely unprecedented that film studies do not stress the contribution of design to meaning production since it stands as a minor entry among the agents that generate meaning in film production such as: textual narrative, fiction, director's perspective, montage, cinematography, audience reception, framing, sequence etc. What is unprecedented is, the contribution of design to cinema is not a widely studied subject in product design studies. In production design the narrative is a given, in product design the narrative is created to trigger the design process.

The analysis of production design is evident as an architecture scholar's responsibility; it is usually the architecture department who studies production design as a filmic manifestation of design profession. Walker (1989) argues that the overlapping power of architecture over the realms of design, crafts, engineering and mass media obscures a sharp definition these professions. Human knowledge, developing qualitatively and quantitatively, results in a tendency towards

fragmentation and specialization. However, mixed media forms tend to be neglected because they cut across several categories and appear to belong none of them (Walker, 1989).

This study will focus on production design as the main visual narrative tool of film. Emerging from the progress of production design, the role of object as the communicative element in cinema will be emphasized; how objects are employed in the daily nonverbal communication, how objects are the defining agents of personality, and how cinema employs this primary nonverbal communication agent as an aspect of visual storytelling within the realm of production design will be demonstrated through the analysis of the film *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999).

## **1.2 Aim of the Study :**

The main objective in conducting this study is to investigate the process and criteria of design in cinema and explore the mutual correspondence between product design and production design. The discourse regarding production design will be investigated and the use of designed object in film production will be explored. Main focus will be on products and objects that reflect the storyline and character development.

Design process of production design will be analyzed to gain perspective on the use of narrative construction and its visualization, and the reflective contributions of objects to production design will be explored.

The identification of the consumer will be elaborated in addition to the usage of the product and the functioning of the product in nonverbal communication of social life. Designed object's ability to characterize its owner as a personality as well as its ability to characterize itself will be investigated.

The identification of the consumer as an individual personality, through design process and through the functioning of the designed object, will be emphasized to project the product owner's identity to the character (the individual that is emphasized in the script) of the screenplay of film. Following, this study will elaborate the visualization of identity in film through production design. The function of designed object will be emphasized within the process of production design. The designed object will be investigated in its social function and its constructive role in nonverbal communication will be identified in order to point out its reflection on the white screen.

Hollywood cinema will be explored in particular in viewing the process and the creation of production design since the term and complexity of the profession is born into Hollywood. Not only the term production design is a product of Hollywood history, Hollywood is an industry which extensively invests on organized and thorough production design. While every cinema film in the film history makes use of set design, Hollywood extensively spares a considerable amount of budget for production design. The History of production design is an element of the history of Hollywood.

A number of Hollywood productions will be analyzed to pinpoint the use function of designed object within the visualization of storyline throughout the study. A comprehensive analysis of the visualization of characters and settings in the movie *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999) will be conducted to identify the production design process as well as the contribution of designed object to the overall film meaning.

## 2. WHAT IS PRODUCTION DESIGN

### 2.1 Production Design

The term production design emerged was coined while *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming, 1939) was in production. Art Director William Cameron Menzies was credited as the production designer in the widely acclaimed film in respect of the amount and level of design work he accomplished by the film's director (Heisner, 1997).

Researchers agree upon the definition of production design as the supervising representative of the general look of the film. It deals with visual representation; its creation, composition, consistency and harmony. LoBrutto, gives an answer to the question of production design.

In its fullest definition, the process and application of production design renders the screenplay in visual metaphors, a **color palette**, architectural and period specifics, **locations**, designs and **sets**. It also coordinates the costumes, makeup and hairstyles. It creates a cohesive pictorial scheme that directly informs and supports the story and its point of view (LoBrutto, 2002).

His particular attention towards a coherent color palette, the consistency of locations and the design of sets exemplifies the lack of attention towards the elements that help create a unified meaning throughout the film such as graspable objects.

Nearly as old as film practice, production design has been a part of cinema since Georges Méliés – even though it was mostly concerned with art direction in the beginning of the phenomenon. As the pioneers of science fiction film, Méliés' works were the first ones to have employed design with an intention to emphasize the narrative. Donald Albrecht observes Méliés' influence:

For his nondocumentary films Méliés established a style that combined elements of realization and stylization, two formal choices that movies designers would henceforth combine in varying proportions to form their own individual and characteristic synthesis ...Under Méliés' influence, movies became a sort of a clearinghouse, animating the static images of postcards, chromolithographs, and family albums which inspired the *misé-en-scène* of many early films (Albrecht, 1986).

Méliés' work and many others following have inspired architects, urban designers and cultural analysts to build theories upon, whereas product design in this progress is discussed very little in comparison. However, Méliés was originally an illusionist, design of his films resembled illusionist theater. They portrayed space, depth and perspective by backdrop paintings, whereas the three dimensional elements that made up the décor were props that were designed in accordance with the artificiality of the backdrops (Albrecht, 1986). One of the central reasons for this particular problem is the fact that, from the time of the earliest films, studio sets have been favored over real locations since there is complete control of materials, lighting, basically every aspect of the architectural unit. For this specific need of total control, production design has frequently been studied as set design. However, by restricting the definition of role of design in filmic representation to set design, researcher sacrifices the production of meaning obtained by other visual elements that help audience reception (Tashiro, 1998).

Control of architectural elements such as space, lighting, materials etc. which occupy a greater attention of production design stage brings along the necessity of architectural know-how. Art directors and production designers have been emerging from the society of architects; great directors, as well as celebrated cinematographers, have always had a powerful sense of architecture. To date, most academic conduct concerning Design and Cinema involves architectural design.

Within the domination of set as the primary occurrence of visual space, design research in film studies is limited to architectural and urban design in general, set design in particular. The interaction of man and object has become almost trivial in this realm. Hollywood cinema has utilized production design by and large as the apparatus of influential imagery, consistency and harmony which holds the visual entirety together almost as early as its birth, the profession was named art direction in the earliest era. Hollywood Cinema provided its audience with the ultimate escapist cinema (Kolker, 1999). It intended to give the spectator the spectacle of his/her desires: perfected body, perfected environment, wealthy and a lifestyle worked to perfection.

H. Mandelbaum and E. Meyers describe the particular tendency of escapist cinema in 1930's America as:

After the Art Deco era, magazines promoted more conservative décor. Filmgoers, however, still expected their fantasies fulfilled, and art directors did not disappoint.

Not only did they extravagant settings, they refined techniques of character delineation through scenic shorthand. (Mandelbaum and Meyer,1989)

Escapist cinema brought viewers the desired scenery and fantasized lifestyles that go through fantasize adventures. Imagery of cinema is about perfecting entities, any concept regarding life, even imperfection itself is rendered in its uniformity. The main apparatus of this perfect image is consistent and thorough image.

Charles and Mirella Affron state that the design process starts with the story that waits to be visualized (Affron and Affron,1995). Production of a film starts at the script. The script gives the director a narrative, and gives the production designer the route to create the visual image. The script generates a plot, a story structured in accordance with the imagery of the writer; it is up to the director and the production designer to formulate the story into a structured visual narrative.

Alex McDowell's Design Mandala illustrating this process along with the process of production design embedded in the whole production timeline will be explored in Chapter 4.

As the classical narrative film is created, the scriptwriter takes a story, and creates a structure of causal sequences. LoBrutto identifies the screenplay as the blueprint of a film, a sequential story of written to be told through the cinematic tools (LoBrutto, 2002). Bordwell defines this sum of causal sequences as canonical plotline. Bordwell suggests that the Hollywood screenplay usually follows the guideline of an undisturbed stage, the disturbance, the struggle, and the elimination of the disturbance (Bordwell, 1985).

The first stage that composes the undisturbed stage introduces the characters who are psychologically and socially defined and the setting that encompasses the film is the principal segment of the film where production design takes supreme control of recorded image. From then on, the film will seek consistence of what has been introduced. The consistent visual image of character and the setting in accordance with the narrative is the objective of design. Emotions, goals and actions or transformation of such into another particular state that are associated with characters and setting are indicated through design decisions.

Bordwell suggests that audience perceives these causal sequences as the milestones of memory; the spectator recalls the plotline as long as there are causal connections (Bordwell, 1985). Projecting this particular thought to designing the introduction, spectator recalls bits and pieces as long as the visual elements in the image tell him/her an entity of importance. At the introduction, spectator seeks clues



to the protagonist's personality, psychology, social status, particular facets that identify him / her as a person. How is a character designed then? How is he / she visually identified? In order to answer this question the designer will refer to public and ask this particular question: How do people design themselves, how do they visualize themselves, how is this visualization projected onto their living environments? These questions may be altered by time considerations of the plot. In science fiction where a society is built with no concrete reference of a similar culture ( i.e. Star Wars saga ) these questions will form a guidance that will help the design process for the production designer; even though the sociocultural structure is fictitious the reference of its structure is retrieved from contemporary sociocultural structure and reception process of the spectator.

Vincent Lobrutto asks his reader, who wants to be or needs to employ a production designer, to consider the following when demonstrating the notion of *the look of a film*:

What emotional impact does the story have?

How does the environment of the narrative reflect the characters?

What is the Psychological nature of the story?

How can the atmosphere of the architecture and physicality of the setting contribute to telling the story visually? (LoBrutto, 2002)

These questions answer the establishment of characters and settings, the environments that belong to the story. Establishment of these elements, unless intentionally clustered among the film, will be composed at the beginning, at the introduction. Lobrutto immediately gives the following exercises:

Study your environments. What do architecture, décor and furnishings communicate about time, space, place and the people who live there?

Keep a visualization diary. How is the physical world of the film visualized? How does the production design define and inform the story and the characters? (LoBrutto, 2002)

The point Lobrutto is stating is simply the fact that environments reflect their occupants, just as outfit combinations, owned and utilized products reflect their owners' personality, their ideology, the time they live in, how much they can afford and other aspects of their characters. The visual realm of social life is embedded in the fact that individuals design themselves: we design our outlook by how we feel, think we personalize our workspaces to feel more personal, we design our living environments to reflect our preferences, our solutions to fulfillment of certain needs,

our emotional, characteristic and at times ideological status and thus create our lifestyle. The cinematic representation of characters at their introduction is mainly about this simple fact: it reveals about lifestyles, personalities through the characters' understanding of themselves, through the course of the film the spectator tends to create his/her own understanding of the characters through their interaction with their environment.

Studies of production design are usually twofold: At one end the object of study is concerned with scenery and focuses on set design and architecture. At the other end, the subject-matter is costume design which is more concerned with general iconography and character presentation.

Filmmaker's Guide to production Design states that usually costume designer comes on after the director and the production designer establish the color palette and texture concept. Production designer coordinates the design of the costumes in accordance with the established design decisions; therefore is concerned with the sum of all design elements (LoBrutto, 2002).

One striking fact of importance is the number of studies focusing on the titles sequence. The opening sequences contain the graphic image of films which progresses onto the marketing of the film. The typography of the opening sequence, almost always progresses onto the posters in the movie theaters, theatrical teasers, DVD cover designs, promotional products etc. The background of the title sequence usually create a hint of the course of film, they are either graphically designed, or braided over a sequence of a film. The communication created at the opening of a film is strikingly important. Granted that production designer is the supervisor of the overall look of the film, the look reflected at the titles sequence design can be observed as the first impression. Consequently, what it communicates is a matter to be elaborated.

### **Design Processes**

Design Processes of Production and Product Design are analogous. The progress of both emerges from a written description. Production Designer's guide is the screenplay. A screen play gives production designer the material to visualize summarized as follows:

- It suggests a genre and a target audience group.
- It generates characters to be described,
- the time period the story advances in,

- The environments that host sequences: Architecture, urban areas, interiors.

Product Designer starts off with a design brief, a problem definition and on to a design solution, when none is given a designer will need to create his own design brief. A Design brief sets the limits as it:

- Indicates the features of corporate identity,
- Defines the target user,
- Indicates the environment of usage
- Describes utility: a certain problem to overcome via design decisions.

Product design process often involves narrative construction with an analogous sequential structure to that of film production. Product designer reflects the social setting of target user group in order to gain perspective of their lifestyle. Product designer characterizes his/her user, creates a narrative that follows the daily cycle of this individual to pinpoint the personal traits, the sociocultural environment and the needs of this user. Storyboards are developed in order to identify the characteristics of the user's environment, so that the designer can identify the product that will diffuse into this environment.

Users obtain a reflection of their self-concepts, the preference of one product over its alternatives depends on how intense this reflection is; the user will employ this product by its ability to display its user's self-concept to him/her and to others in addition to its principal utility. (Sirgy,1982) Designers, in respect, follow the tendency of designing with such a consideration in mind: trends are identifying linings of taste, class, character and emotions; an products are objects of trends, users are buyers of not only products but of trends, thus buyers of lifestyle. As this particular trend becomes more and more popular, the process of purchasing and using artifacts become a sort of a way to enhance identity in visual form. Augmenting the emphasis of lifestyle in ones visual form increasingly leads to the desire to identify oneself in visual. Consumer culture, the product and main dependence of post modern society, has created a sphere of this continuous progress. İlhan echoes Douglas and Isherwood in that the question of preferences can not be simply answered by utility; individual is in constant need to become a subject, a personality with subjective substance that is accepted within the limits of a desired cultural and social group. Preferences over objects are the visual evidences that prove the individual to be a subject with the desired substance. (İlhan, 2006) İlhan argues that, in the Lacanian sense, individual's attempts of identification is formed around an undefined

ambiguous void. Designed product of the consumerist society is the solution to this attempt of identification.

Like every single produced artifact, designed product is the result of cultural production.

Cultural production is the process by which cultural products (including goods, artifacts, visual and experiential objects, services, and art forms) are created, transformed, and diffused in the constitution of consumer culture (Lash and Urry 1994 cited by Venkatesh and Meamber 2006) .

Products are simply objects that are actively used by their owners. Thus objects reveal certain information just by appearing in a certain environment, most of which belongs to its owner. Even when they not actively employed for a certain function at the moment of their appearance, there is certain information immediately communicated by their presence and their possession by a certain individual. The individual is able to afford / operate / identify with this particular product, it satisfies / solves a particular task for this individual. Here we can argue that the reason for a particular product to be owned by a person may be twofold: The product usually indicates a level of intelligence, existence within a sociocultural group, a personality trait or it indicates a level of necessity.

Cinematic visualization of individual as a social character employs the characteristics of the designed object. The iconographical configuration of the character relies heavily on the communicative aspects of designed object, designed environment and designed self. The communication is twofold: The character on the screen communicates these traits to the other characters that he / she is in interaction with during the course of the film. The characters of the film have already, or will eventually, employ the nonverbal communication skills of daily life in their social interactions. The character communicates the same traits and possibly more, to the audience. The production designer's main concern is addressing the audience; the script provides a character whose main concern is the society that is included in the film. Thus the production designer addresses both.

## **2.2 Film Narrative**

In order to investigate the contribution of production design in the representation of a film's fiction, it is critical to study film's substance. The triggering force of a film production is the script. LoBrutto observes the urge to make a film is either to tell a story, deliver a message, express emotion, to dream, imagine, or entertain

audiences.(LoBrutto, 2002) All or any of these drives includes storytelling in a succession of structured visual sequences. Emergence of a structured story told by the film generates the concept of narrative. Narrative, found in all forms of storytelling, is a film's substance, the account of the story emphasized within its structure. Gerard Genette, refers to film's function in terms of storytelling as the narrative text (Hayward, 1986).

Susan Hayward, defines the concept of narrative as follows:

Narrative involves recounting of real or fictitious events. ... Narrative refers to strategies, codes and conventions (including *misé-en-scène* and lighting) employed to organize a story. (Hayward, 1996)

The storyline of a film is emphasized in sequences of the story, underlined in the motivation of actions of characters and evident in the *misé-en-scène*, therefore is the guiding force of the visualization of the "real world" fictionalized in the script. The narrative of a film is the threshold of the film's reflection of the real world, therefore it creates a platform of reality for the spectator to identify with or sympathize to be a possibility (Hayward, 1996).

Bordwell defines narrative as either a process of telling a story, a representation of a real life event emphasizing a statement or a structure of storytelling. Studies of narrative have been exclusively developed within a structuralist approach. Bordwell state that spectator creates a structured mind-map of the film depending on causal associations, the narrative that supports this process follows a canonical pattern: the undisturbed stage / the disturbance / the struggle / the elimination of the disturbance. Bordwell argues, story comprehension researches show that the most common model to be recognized as a canonical storyline follows:

- i. The introduction of characters and setting
- ii. The Establishment of interactions, affairs
- iii. A complicating action
- iv. Resulting Ramifications
- v. Outcome
- vi. Ending (Bordwell,1986)

This order/disorder/order cycle is described at times as order/enigma/resolution (Hayward, 1996). In order to grasp an understanding how narrative influences the

overall outlook of the film, the elements of narrative that are essential to the genre and storytelling style are explained as follows.

### **Diegesis**

The content of the narrative in auditory and visual form brings up the concept of diegesis. Diegesis, as defined by Genette, refers to the sequences of events as they are projected on the screen, thus encircles the events in their audio-visual representations. The diegetic content of film is the realm that contains the concern of this study, the visualization of real life representation. A particular strategy involved the representation of the diegetic content is repetition. In order to remain the film's diegetic content in juxtaposition, visual or discursive features are repeated (Hayward, 1996). Repetition may be in the form of variation or opposition; in any case, it will trigger a repetition of the diegetic content.

Diegetic content refers to the auditory and visual elements of representation, thus, directly related to the genre as well as the mode of fiction visualized by the director's method signification. Diegetic content is the visual mise-en-scene that composes the storyline. A western film's most conventional diegetic content, for instance, is the cultural heritage of America. The visualization involves isolated towns, cowboys and gunfighters, town's sheriff and so on. The visual diegetic contents are, consequently, neckerchiefs, guns, ten gallon hats; and the other objects, interiors and urban units that are immediately connoted at the utterance of the phrase "a western film". The content of the narrative, therefore, is the mediator of a film's genre.

### **Genre**

The term genre stands for a categorization of the fictional work. In film history, genre exists almost as early as its emergence, with George Meliés immediately forming the category of science fiction film, and is established as a way of codifying films according to typical aspects of the fictional material. Genre is far from a method of classification in that it does not only refer to the textual content but it refers to institutional discourse that forms its structure, its audience expectations and assumptions as well (Hayward, 1996). Audience expectations require certain codes and conventions to be applied to a film, genre audiences expect to see certain visual elements to be essentially included in the film to identify with the fictionalized reality. Genre film proves to be conventional in this sense. However, audience expectations, paradoxically, call for innovations, updating via technological development in image recording, and storytelling.

Technological development in image recording and storytelling exhausts itself in the film industry, in an attempt to diffuse into the norms of codes and conventions and mesmerize the audience in fascination; and thus acquire further employment. More often than not, such technological developments lay their groundwork and become an integral part of the genre, if not alter it in the process. Examples of such include Hitchcock's zoom-in dolly-out in thrillers, ever-updating special effects of science fiction etc. The paradoxical nature of genre, requirement of conservation and innovation simultaneously produces hybrid genres and subcategories. These, in turn, create their audience population.

Genre, particularly in Hollywood, is a well designed product. It responds to expectations, from the industry and from the audiences. Addressing industry expectations, genre produces formulas that sell the film and yet introduces new, fruitful methods that shift and update generic conventions; the paradoxical stand is the similar for the audience expectations which seek familiar traces and yet encourage change and originality (Hayward, 1996).

Updating of favored, thus profitable genre emerges from keeping up with audience expectations. (LoBrutto,2002) Codes and conventions update over time and ideological agenda, audiences prefer to view the socio-cultural features of their contemporary agenda.

### **Codes of Film Narrative**

Codes and conventions constitute the overall representation of a specific genre, illustrating the visualized narrative; they are the signifying visual elements of the genre, alternatively referred to as canonic laws. Codes and conventions are formed by the generic context, the social context and the historical context. (Hayward, 1996) Codes and conventions are formed, altered and updated by time, and social / ideological agenda of the society, that of audience and of cinema.

Codes of a specific genre, are the expected norms associated with the genre. Audiences of a given genre expect to receive these basic elements of visualization when they choose to see a film of that genre. The diegetic contents, visual elements, camera angles, sequences and so on specify a characteristic code specific to a particular genre. The mix-and-match strategies in employing codes or altering, and updating according to applicable technology create an update in generic conception. If widely accepted by critics and audiences, consequently, hybrid genres and subcategories are formed.

## **Iconography**

Codes and conventions include the visual iconography that is specific to narrative. Iconography is the main domain of production designer since it is the visual realm of the setting, and therefore will be emphasized.

Iconography, which the most influential element of narrative that is in direct reference to production design, is described largely the set of objects that is inserted in the film or the audience to make associations (Lacey, 1998). They are connotative visual sets of the film that help characters and settings. It is the production designer's responsibility to keep a consistent iconographical organization throughout the film, as iconography is created with reference to the characteristic diegetics of genre.

Each setting, each character is taken individually in composing its visual image derived from the screenplay. Iconography makes a consistent visualization, and therefore addressing the audience properly, possible. In the widest sense, iconography refers to all the material that the production designer has, or comes up with, in order to visualize and demonstrate the material look and sound of the narrative.

There are numerous icons in a given Hollywood production, other than the set of objects, interiors and urban areas of the setting; Hollywood equals icon in every aspect of the word. A Hollywood production's first and foremost icon is its star, a celebrity who has agreed to portray the protagonist or a significant character in the narrative. The celebrity appearing in a film gives the audience the source of identification, attachment, and idealization (through performance).

## **2.3 Film Production Process**

As Charles and Mirella Affron state film production starts with the story (Affron & Affron, 1995). The script generates the narrative that is followed all through the film. In order for a story to provide the director and the production staff with a structured guideline, a screenplay needs to be generated from the script. LoBrutto argues that the screenplay is ought to be constructed bearing a consistent visualization in mind (LoBrutto, 2002). A screenplay indicates genre, provides insight for diegetic content and gives the director a sequential narrative with an underlined sentiment, ideology, an highlight on a historical account etc. addressing the spectator, the socio-cultural background for the story in addition to generation of specifications regarding the setting and the characters. The sum of such accounts is discussed by the director,



cinematographer and the production designer to decide on a comprehensive identity of the film. This identity is expected to be reflected in the color palette, lighting, conspicuous choice of persistent camera angles and to be underlined by the overall design. In addition, the screenplay provides the actor with the traits of the character to perform, design of the character is supposed to emphasize these traits to be consistent with the acting performance.

Film production depends greatly on the vision of the director on his interpretation of the script. It is director's imperative to develop a point of view and communicate that with the production designer, who will be responsible for visualizing it and the director of photography who will be responsible for its recording. As the central creative force, director assumes a firm idea of how to translate the script cinematically. (LoBrutto,2002) Directors with a strong sense of opinion toward the cinematic design guide the production on the film's overall design; many directors are known for this aspect of their conduct such as Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Terry Gilliam, Tim Burton and so on. Alfred Hitchcock's Macguffin, for instance, is a driving force of his films. The MacGuffin is an object in a story that superficially drives the plot. (Milton,2003) Through the use and the degree of revealing / concealing the MacGuffin the cinematographic framing and motion are determined.

An all-encompassing visual style or look of the film comes from the trinity comprised of director, production designer and director of photography (LoBrutto, 2002). Production designer breaks down the screenplay scene by scene with the director, forms a conception of what the director's point of view is, and presents it in tangible form. Director of photography, is responsible for composition, camera movement and lighting and image recording; coming in later in this analysis director of photography delivers the vision of the director on film. The three important figures of production decides on a generic metaphor that will drive the visualized script in its recording phase. The design palette will create and maintain consistency in light of this metaphor. Lighting, framing, and camera movement will determine the cognitive process of the audience for the desired effect.

Costume designer, comes on upon the completion of the storyboard, and automatically, the overall design is basically constructed. Required special effects are estimated for budgetary requirements, Special effects team and costume designer are hired after the visual narrative is concluded. They reinforce the visual consistency and proper necessities. Interior sets require objects and graphics as background fillers and objects that are individually employed within the script. These objects are named props, provided by the property master. The supply of props

might require purchasing, sponsorship or designing. In science fiction, these object are usually designed or virtually added at post-production.

Director of photography, joining at later storyboarding, creates specific lighting and camera adjustments that reflect the director's point of view on the narrative. Shooting scene at location, studio or virtual environment requires the director, the director of photography and production design present at all times.

As the necessary image recording is finalized, post-production stage occurs where the special effects team enter and implement virtual backgrounds, completing the images. Editor and the director at the final stage of post-production determines the sequential lining of the images, determine the necessary juxtaposition. Montage, has been one the most important meaning production vehicles of film making since the early ages of Film History. Its content and ideology, however, is not the subject of this study.

The opening sequence of a film is the tool of first impression. Diffused into the beginning, disclosed for the end of the film, or composed as a cameo itself, title sequence carries clues of the essence of the film embedded in its elements. Typography, montage and/or sequential juxtaposition of images of the opening sequence must be in correspondence with the film's main account. Nearly every film's typography stands as a brand logo for the film; therefore, graphic design of the title reflects the essence of the whole.



**Figure 2.1.** Back to the Future Typography



**Figure 2.2.** Gangs of New York Typography



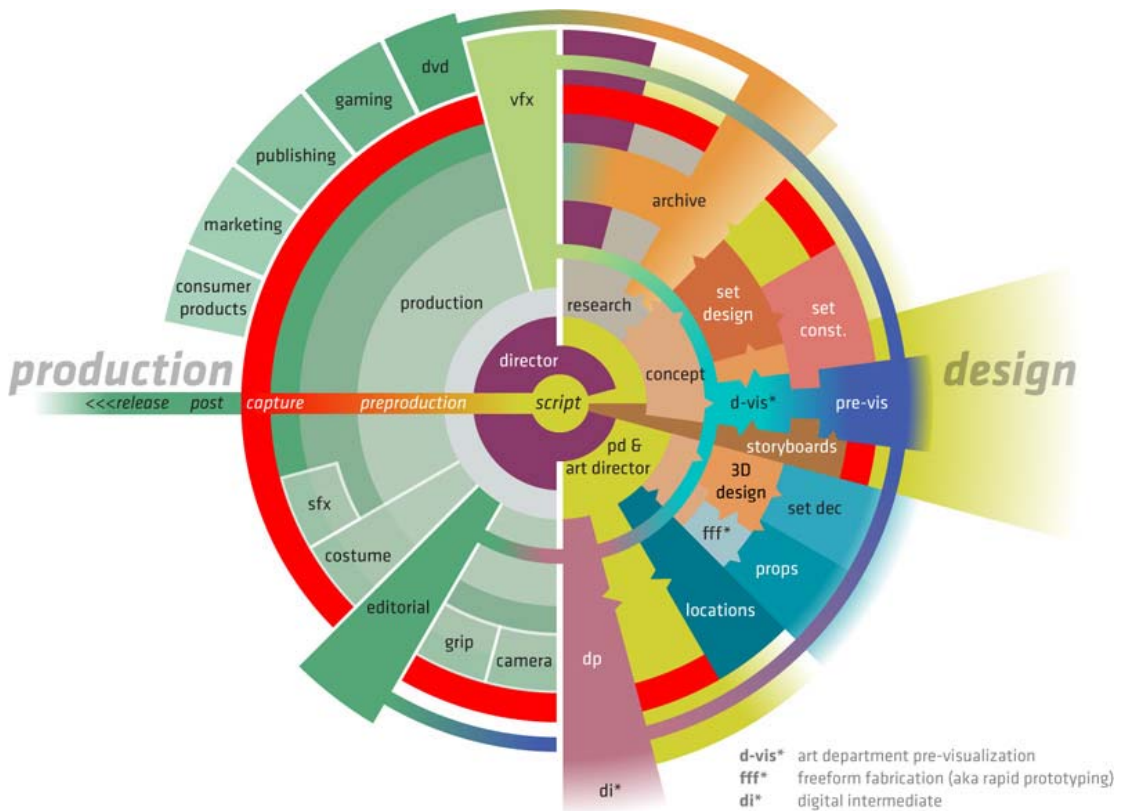
**Figure 2.3.** Fight Club Typography

The typography of the film titles above illustrate design with respect to the genre characteristics. While Back to the Future logotype indicates speed and dynamism, Gangs of New York logotype illustrates nostalgia. Fight Club logotype on the other hand is subtle in its design. As a contemporary film for the era, the logotype features a slightly tilted font with the letters simplified of their extremities, indicating a rather contemporary, dynamic narrative.

#### **2.4 Production Design Process in Film**

Production design requires hard effort, extreme coordination and effective teamwork in order to be successful. Statistical research shows that, contemporary Hollywood film requires a production team number of members of which increases almost every year, a similar increase is observed on the production budget.

## Design Mandala of Production Design Process:



**Figure 2.4.** Design Mandala (McDowell, 2003)

The multilayered representation of production design's coordination is shown in a circular color coded scheme. At the core is script and its evaluation by direct and production designer is drawn at its periphery. Coordination and progress expands to the edges in multi-layers, layering shows the stages of production, the braiding is shown in details.

Production design process starts of with reading and generating overall design concept. The process of cinematic design is outlined as follows:

- Concept generation: The script is read together with the director and a concept that will govern the overall visualization is decided upon.
- Breaking down the screenplay: The screenplay gives each scene with character interaction and a written description. Each scenes are broken down and a set of propositions regarding the overall set design, objects that will be included, location propositions are provided for the director. Director's approval is necessary in that these scenes and overall design needs to reflect his/ her interpretation of the narrative.

- Concept sketches: Following the approval concept sketches are made, necessary material regarding storyboarding is prepared.
- Research: Research is crucial in reinforcing the reality effect. LoBrutto lists the resources for research as:

*Paintings*: Artworks offer unique ways of seeing and interpretation, historical account of architecture, cultural background social affairs etc.

*Literature*: Novels, news, autobiographies can reinforce the resource generated by artwork.

*Oral History*: Witnesses provide subjective but more powerful account on social and cultural settings.

*Photographs and Magazines*: Magazine and photographs indicate popular trends, preferences and technological status and so on.

*Experts*: Scholars and scientists may provide objective information on reality construction. Films that are set in futuristic or fantastic settings may require scientific expertise to build a coherent reality. Minority Report is known for its research stage, where Alex McDowell and Steven Spielberg have consulted, scientists, urban scientists, transportation technologies and decided on the developments that conform to the decided setting and timeline.

- Storyboarding: Storyboarding generates the blueprint of visual narrative. Each scene is drawn in key frames which depict the overall setting, desired influence and interaction patterns.
- Budgeting: The conduct of production design requires an important portion of production budget. The proposed setting generates an estimated budget which requires approval of producers.
- Color palette: The coloring of a film is designed in order to indicate desired metaphors, mood, atmosphere and psychological sensibility.
- Texture palette: Texture evokes differences in materials, age of materials, interiors, architectures, and reflects the results of environmental conditions on surfaces. Texture illustration is critical in the construction of the reality effect. Know-how on material behavior is necessary in both predicting and

reproducing the texture of a given material. Artificially constructed textures are observed at the research stage and composed in studio conditions.

- Location scouting: Necessary locations are traced and director is informed. Location selection depends on architectural signification, weather conditions and urban social dynamic. For instance, Ocean's Eleven's production design team reveal that the house of Rubin, a has-been casino owner was shot in Palm Springs California because the desired style in mansions where not found in Las Vegas.
- Set Design: After locations and studio sets decided upon design of sets start off. Set designers provide detailed drawings and renderings at this stage. Production designer's responsibility of coordination among production design department emerges.
- Prop Management / Product Placement: Property masters provide props that will be used, props can be rented, purchased or designed specifically for the production. Product placement agreements are carried on at this stage.
- Set construction: Designs are executed.

Production Design process resembles the process of product design in many of its key steps. Starting off with a written text, composition of visual narrative is almost identical except in scale. As illustrated above, several areas of constraints (such as character, setting, institution and production) show similarities between production design and product design processes (Table.2.1.).

**Table 2.1.** Comparison of Production Design and Product Design Processes

Relating Factors	Production Design	Product Design
<b>Character Constraint</b>	Analysis of character in production design	Analysis of consumer profile in product design
<b>Setting Constraint</b>	Character influence in personal settings	Usage environment
<b>Institutional Constraint</b>	Genre codes and conventions	Corporate identity
<b>Production Constraint</b>	Budget estimations	Estimated production costs

### **3. VISUALIZATION FROM SCREENPLAY TO IMAGE**

#### **3.1 Visual Narrative**

Production design team uses the guide of the screenplay to create a visual narrative. Storyboarding, the main tool of performing the visual narrative, models an outlook of the film, presents the identity of the film. Storyboard provides the vision of the cinematic design, and possibly hints to its recording. It includes the generic codes and conventions that will be employed in the design, presenting provision of the visual diegetic content.

Storyboard gives the visual sequences of the film in key frames. Key frames may generate an idea on the setting, character's interactions, emotional status, socioeconomic status; heightened sensations, complications, resolutions etc., establish the outlook of sets and locations with necessary design elements that reflect the effects of the ongoing narrative, habitation or public utilization. Location shooting or studio generated sets are compared and decided upon their effectiveness. The need to create backdrop paintings or virtual background fillers is decided. Production design crew and director of photography brainstorm on the setting and make notes on each scene, how the setting will be composed, dressed, what type of props (objects and products) will be used, how the path of interaction will be set, director's approval will determine final decisions. It is critical to provide a visual narrative that emphasizes the director's interpretation of the script; many directors choose to work with a production designer that they had built a good working relationship; such pairings include Woody Allen and Mel Bourne, Spike Lee and Wynn Thomas and so on (Heisner, 1997). Production design's function is not only dress a text in visual form. Production designer synthesizes the story and underlines the filmic metaphor that will serve the narrative of the film, decides on how to impart such subtext in visual form (LoBrutto, 2002).

The narrative's underlined metaphor is communicated through the characters' personal traits, ideological stand, emotional status and it is the filmic design that communicates these features in visual metaphors which are either in repetition, or advance. As Chandler states, visual metaphor involves a function of 'transference', transferring certain qualities from one sign to another. The aim is to transfer the

qualities signified by a certain element, thus substituting one signified for another, and creating a new metaphorical sign. (Chandler, 1994) In film, it is the collaborative effort of cinematic design that forms the signifying visual elements that transfer the implied qualities from one sign to another. For instance, the kitchen oven in Mr. and Mrs. Smith, conceals lethal weapons for Mrs. Smith; it is complex in mechanism, operation of which is second nature to Mrs. Smith. This obscured second function of the household item reveals that Mrs. Smith is mysterious; while she has put together domestic life that portrays her as an average housewife, she is secretly a private assassin. Her secret, complicated occupation is represented in the state-of-the-art technology that conceals items that are in extreme contrast with the domestic environment. The metaphor is repeated in the film where Mrs. Smith's office conceals the secret headquarters of her real occupation, in which the secret workspace is furnished with high-end digital technology.



**Figure 3.1.** Mr. and Mrs. Smith (2005)

Design metaphors keep the cinematic design in coherence, the desired effect once created, needs to be maintained or advanced throughout the entirety of the film to have the audience's comprehension. In a striking example, the metaphor of butterfly emerging from its cocoon is frequently revisited in "The Silence of Lambs" (Demme, 1991). The butterfly metaphor stands for both Clarice emerging from her student status to an FBI agent, Buffalo Bill's creating himself a new identity in a woman's skin as well as Dr. Lecter escaping his captivity. Butterflies emerge as Clarice manages to solve the first puzzle Dr. Lecter provides her, in Buffalo Bill's



cellar where he keeps a collection of cocoons, the first victims room is furnished with butterfly patterns (Heisner, 1997).

The main concern of visualizing a script is the reality effect. According to Leon Barsacq, the fundamental requirement of cinema is to give the impression of having photographed real objects (Tashiro, 1998). Reality effect assures that the story conforms to the notion of reality of the audience; creates the illusion that the story is possible to have occurred. It is what gives the production designer the ultimate challenge. Production designers agree that the good set is one that is invisible, one that does not attract attention. In vast majority of films that seek to produce a strong reality effect, the dominant narrative intention would have suffered drastically had the set appeared other than true to life (Affron & Affron, 1995).

Reality effect is in constant interaction with the fiction effect, in order to gain full identification with the narrative. The ever-present fiction effect derives from the consciousness of the fact that the ongoing story on the screen is recorded in a different time in a place. This is a result of viewing the story on a screen that has boundaries, the screen limits the ability to see what is outside its boundaries; the lifelike quality of the image on the screen is abruptly cut short around edges with the sharp volume of darkness. It is the designer's responsibility to use the fiction effect to the film's advantage, inconspicuously diffuse reality into the fictional space and compose the desired image.

### **3.2 Visualization of Character:**

Portrayal of the characters is a critical matter in cinematic design. As Bordwell states, the causal connections that help the audience create a mind-map of the narrative starts on with the comprehension of characters (Bordwell, 1986). The characters of the script are created in the author's vision of them; therefore it is essential keep the design coherent to the script with the addition of director's conception. There are critical signs that ought to be addressed in the design of a character. LoBrutto asks the potential production design to trace the screenplay for:

- How old are the characters?
- What is their ethnic and social background?
- What social class do they belong to?
- What is their personal style?

The visualization of characters, just as the décor's responsibility to be true to life, carries the responsibility to be true to life. The experience of reading the visual image of individuals in public life is the spectator's main tool of deciphering the characters. Therefore, the explicit reason in LoBrutto's last question for the design of character is that a person's style is a code put together by themselves for other members of society to decipher and discover what the personal traits underneath that image is. Barthes describes this personal meaning that is transferred through an assemblage of objects as syntagms (Barthes, 1994). This assemblage is not a static entity fulfilling its duty among completion; it is a dynamic existence which breathes through interaction. This interaction is one that advances through the updating of senders' point of view of themselves, personal, sociocultural and professional concerns, and ideological agenda, and the receivers' perception and interpretation sequence. It is this principle that cinematic image employs to visualize its characters. Within the determined color palette the characters are dressed, accessorized and placed into the visual narrative. Codes of dressing, hair design, accessories and products are used for addressing the underlined traits of the characters, conforming to the chronological or foreseen schema of aesthetical notions. The sum of such codes determines the visual diegetic elements and conform to the codes of the genre that the narrative belongs to. Intradiegetic visual content which shapes the image of characters, is metonymic / synecdochic in this sense. The determined assemblages represent a character through their indexical relation which derives from the fact that certain objects are created for and used by a certain group of people. The synecdochic index is embedded in that these assemblages are selected from an imaginative wardrobe and belongings which possibly contains many other assemblages, excluding conditions that are emphasized by the script which denote that the ones on the screen are the only ones. Indeed, the formal frame of any visual image (painting, drawing, photograph, film or television frame) functions as a synecdoche in that it suggests that what is being offered is a 'slice-of-life', and that the world outside the frame is carrying on in the same manner as the world depicted within it. (Chandler, 1994) Such reference is noted as metonymic by Barthes, stating that a character will represent all analogous characters in society. The metonymic index is referent of the fact that while the design of the character is assembled together for the specific narrative, it points out to a stereotypical notion of such characters.

The psychological reading of characters is a descriptive tool for the generic metonyms that will determine their characteristic traits, and provide design decisions. An infamous trace of psychological reading of the character in material form is the reading of femme fatale in *Film Noir*. The psychological traits of femme fatale are extensively emphasized in costume design. The femme fatale is the woman who emphasizes sexuality, instability and untrustworthiness through her suggestive, boldly colored and dynamic wardrobe, stereotypical accessories such as stilettos, cigarettes. Her accessories commodify her sex appeal around her legs, her chest and her ankles (Bruzzi,1997).

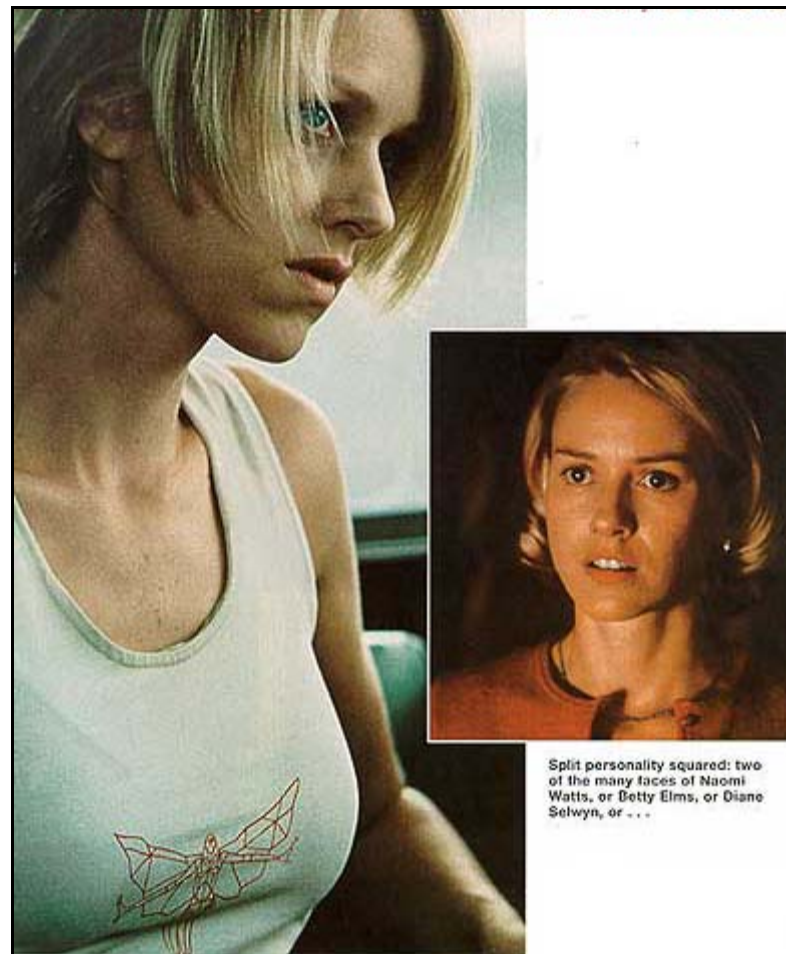


**Figure 3.2.** Gilda ( Gilda, 1946)

The cabaret singer Gilda is the one of the most famous femme fatale characters establishing the archetype's cultural prominence, from the feature film *Gilda* (Vidor, 1946) who sexually manipulates her husband and his best friend. ( Fig.3.2)

The protagonist of *Mullholand drive* is seen as an actress who moves to California in search of stardom, in the first part of the film the spectator is introduced to an enthusiastic city girl who is well-behaved and colorful. Her apartment is neat, furnished with upper-middle standards of aristocracy that is stated to be belonging to her aunt, She immediately fits in the environment in the suggestion that her surrounding at her previous residency has been similar. In the second part of the film, progressing after the infamous phrase *time to wake up*, we are introduced to her real life where she has failed in her attempts to become successful, and her life-partner has deserted her resulting in depression. Her apartment is what she has dreamt, with the one exception that the occupant in the dream is a decaying corpse of an unidentifiable female. Her appearance has dramatically changed. Her hairstyle, her wardrobe has drastically diminished as her state of mentality (Fig.3.3).

Spaces that indicate a long-term individual occupation determine the character's inhabitation and working habits and further clue on their personal traits. Objects of preference play a crucial role in settings as such, personality is mirrored through preferences in such personal spaces, implicitly indicating a totality of ideology, state of mind, emotional stance and characteristic features. Deciphering of these connotations depend on the audience's social background and knowledge on the social structure of the particular setting visualized in the filmic image. ( Tashiro, 1998) However, according to Tashiro, such connotations carry the risk of misinterpretation on the spectator's part, in the case of which a culturally transparent object becomes opaque and the intended message fades unnoticed.



**Figure.3.3.** Mulholland Drive (2001), two faces of Betty.

### 3.3 Visualization of Setting:

Visualization of setting is the focus of production design, art direction and set design literatures. Set Design, or décor, is the area of concentration where most of the effort of visualization revolves around. The settings determine for the audience the time period, either approximately (Se7en, Fight Club) or exactly (Goodfellas, Gangs of New York); ethnic and sociocultural condition, and degree of personalization. While period and cultural denotations depict societal traits, interiors with personalized touch depict character features. The significance of set design in film production is illustrated by Charles and Mirella Affron as:

Only two the elements of feature film are subject to being photographed: actors and décor. Actors have a narrative analog in character (Walter Hudson is Sam Dodsworth) just as décor has in fictional space ( the set Richard Day designed is Sam Dodsworth's office). (Affron & Affron, 1995)

In this sense, the reading of décor is inseparable from the visual narrative. Charles Affron and Mirella Affron argue that, the design of the setting corresponds to the narrative through its opacity or transparency. Within this particular argument they form a taxonomy in which they classify set design into five levels of intensity:

Set as Denotation: Affrons stress the importance of designing with the consideration of the cultural codes as familiar instances from the real social life. The first category of design intensity, *Set as Denotation* dwells on the conventional reality effect and serves only to depict time, period and daily life as the genre suggests. Authors observe in a conventional private eye film, *The Maltese Falcon*, Sam Spade is a detective tracing after a mystery; if Spade's office is typical of the place of business of a paradigmatic private detective (resembling therefore among others the locations of his own previous incarnations) -that is small cramped by its worn desk and leather chair, telephone and file cabinet- it has the further distinction of resembling Sam's apartment, itself typical of the Private Investigator residence. The apartment and the office have in common not only the look but the tools of the detective's trade: The desk, chair, telephone, files. All which signify a function which will be employed at one of the points of the film. Telephone in such narratives, for instance signifying communication with the outside world is contemporarily descended to a basic filler, once substituted for computers which signifies digital information network.

Set as Punctuation: Set designs under this category are not only descriptive elements that define the genre characteristics and imply time, mood and environment but are dynamically expressive in that the central theme as time space and characters with an emphasis on gender, ethnicity and class are underlined with advanced narrative scheme. Film noir is categorized under this level.

Set as Embellishment: This category contains sets that are more than expressive sets of time, mood and environment in that they directly relate to and represent the narrative itself. These sets have unique stylistic designs that stand out at once, which become a central obligation of the narrative. Epic films of historical content fall under this category.

Sets as Artifice: In this level of intensity set design emphasizes its own artificiality. Sets of this level valorize fiction effect over reality effect. Science fiction and fantasy films are classified as sets as artifice. However, sets that narrate a fantasy, dream, psychedelic and euphoric moments are frequently differentiated from the overall

characteristic of set design in most films with lower levels of intensity. Particularly such set design is dressed by specially designed props and interiors.

Set as Narrative: The décor itself stands out as the central narrative. In observation, authors state that films with such narratives usually employ a single locale which confines the action, characters and aspects of the plot within themselves. Specifically this level of design intensity requires focus on coherence. The compelling narrative architecture in *Cube* (Natali,1997), the courtyard in *Rear Window* ( Hitchcock, 1954).

While Charles and Mirella Affron create this taxonomy of design intensity with a comparative relation of set design to its narrative purpose, Tashiro claims that restricting design to its narrative purpose will obscure a study of filmic design. It is argued that while objects dress, emphasize and generate interaction in settings, they do so with intended connotations. However, the sociocultural associations that objects have independently of the narrative, overlooking such influence will generate an unsteady mixture of connotations. ( Tashiro,1998) This is applicable to high profile Hollywood films that are distributed for screening worldwide. Therefore, audiences of different cultural backgrounds contain the risk of reading films differently.

Production Designer Douglas Kraner articulates the design of beach house according to the personality considerations of characters in *Sleeping With The Enemy*:

The director and I decided that the house had to fit the husband's personality and be alienating to the wife. Yet at the same time we wanted to incorporate the idea that, at least at some point, something about him had to be attractive to her. (Heisner, 1997)



**Figure 3.4** Beach House Interiors, **Figure 3.5** *Sleeping With the Enemy* (1991)

The notion of a space depicting its owner's character is again in accordance with Norman's principle that all individuals are designers once they shape their environment to reflect their self-concepts; and consequently create places out of spaces, homes out of houses, and workspaces out of offices. Personalization through products that generate attachment allow individuals to create such convenient designs. In this perspective, the spaces that host filmic narrative can be defined as personal, public or isolated. Personal spaces require character oriented signification, therefore can be metonymic (workplace with file cabinets, picture frames, computers) or metaphoric( a beach house having alienated qualities to wife which connote her alienation progress from her marriage); whereas public spaces exclusively denote sociocultural and historical agenda and therefore are metonymic.

Bandini and Viazzi observe that the décor either determines the psychology of the character, express the psychology of the character or it is subject to the actions of the character. Thus the décor is of dominance, or of consonance, or of subordination (Affron & Affron, 1995). It is in this particular approach that objects and props that are used to dress the set determine the interaction with the space and therefore determine the mentioned qualities. As the set is designed with a set of objects appears on the screen, objects included trigger a parade of self-narratives, which, even if they are not used, connote to a timeline of acquiring, placing and utilizing at an appropriate time, and therefore present information about their owners.

These objects, whether used for the visualization of the setting or the character are categorized as *iconography* (echoing the narrative, characterization, themes and setting). Iconography stands for a familiar stock of images or motifs, the connotations of which have become fixed; primarily but not necessarily visual, including décor, costume and objects, certain 'typecast' performers (some of whom may have become 'icons'), characteristic music and sounds, and appropriate physical topography; (Chandler, 1994)

Iconographical nature of objects derives from the fact that encoding and deciphering of the visual image is a semiological process. The visual narrative is composed of such iconography and topography and presented to the audience.

### **3.4 Object Assembly As a Vital Element of Representation:**

Charles Tashiro states that closing up on an object will generate a pause on the narrative sequence. This statement disregards the objects communicative abilities of



itself and its consumer. Objects are designed to fulfill a certain utility; however design research often suggests that utility is not their only function (see Govers and Mugge [2004] on emotional design). They also communicate their own narrational sequence. Bordwell's narration sequence suggests that at the first stage the setting and characters introduced to the audience. As this introduction progresses these particular pauses of closing up on designed interiors and objects continue on their own narrational sequence, which is either executed within the narrative timeline or evidently had been executed at a given point by their consumer.

Occasionally objects are inserted to illustrate a certain aspect in the narrative, their operation does not pause but rather advance narrative: In this example of *Devil Wears Prada*:

The chief Editor of *Runway*, a very respectable fashion magazine, is Miranda Priestly. Among many of her distinct personal traits, she is a professional who draws a strict line between her personal life and her professional life. Her assistant carries the task of delivering a mock up of the magazine to her house. Miranda reviews the book every night and returns with her notes. The book in the movie is designed as a thick bounded notebook; top cover is the colored front page and the rest is furnished with post-its of various colors. It stands for two separate notions of narrative: It stands for process of Miranda's occupation: She is the editor and she thoroughly conducts the magazine: edits the monthly magazine on a daily basis. Secondly it represents the borderline between Miranda's personal life and professional life drawn by Miranda herself. She has mastered the education of this process. The process is narrated by the first assistant while carried out by the second assistant: The book is delivered by entering the house and dropping off at the ground floor. Ground floor as close as the assistant can approach Miranda's personal life. It is strictly forbidden to be noticed. She is supposed to quietly place the book and leave. The house is a town house in New York consisted of multiple floors. As Andrea, the protagonist who is the second assistant, enters the house not knowing which table to put the book on, she is manipulated by Miranda's daughters to go upstairs, just for their amusement. She goes upstairs with the book in her arms to find Miranda and her husband arguing, noticing at once what the borderline stands for; she has failed in not crossing it and she is in danger of being fired.



**Figure 3.6.** Devil Wears Prada (2006)

Object's power of symbolizing a personal trait has been emphasized in previous chapters. In cinema, this particular capacity is frequently used. Objects have the ability of functioning as a narrative entity embodied in concrete form. *Dogville* (Trier, 2003), a striking film that emphasizes a set design approach which is a hybrid of set as artifice and set as narrative, is speculative in its set design which is contradictory to conventional cinematic design. The foremost contradiction is the film's determinate use of stage design which exclusively valorizes the fiction effect instead of cinematic design which attaches greatest importance to reality effect. Visualization of fiction effect is omnipresent with the public space and architecture of the town of *Dogville*, which are uttered by the narrator, written down on the ground with a distinct typography, but not materialized. However, reality effect is not missing from the visual narrative, the personal traits such as occupation, habits, and dwelling arrangement is portrayed with objects in metonymic representations. (Fig.3.7) A writer has a typewriter a multilayered desk (only one in town), a gift shop has a window (only one in town) and artifacts, a mother of three has several beds and a cradle (only one in town) in her house, a blind intellectual has elegant furniture and heavy curtains, the church organist has a bell and a piano, the downtown worker has a truck with all of which the protagonist interacts at one point in the narrative, as she interacts with their owner. When the ill-mannered town folks receive their comeuppance from the protagonist, she is firing a distinctively large rifle. The weapon arrives with her father who is a powerful mafia leader who arrives in a large, black modern car. In contrast, the elements of nature are drawn in chalk, doors are missing and are indicated by actor mimicry, there are no walls or ceilings and some

of the physical features are formed in abstract aesthetics such as the cave the protagonist hides in.



**Figure 3.7.** Dogville (2003)

## **4. CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY**

### **4.1 Visual Representation of Identity**

Designers shape experience. Designers construct identity. Designers organize collective efforts and animate the potential latent in social situations. Designed objects mediate human interactions and provoke emotional responses among users (Buchanan, et. al. 2007).

Identity shaped through design and officiated through utility by consumers is a popular notion; so popular that it is an inevitable aspect of marketing. When there are endless alternatives for particular utility, aspects of design stand out as the descriptive stylish feature that is determinant of final decision, at times within the reasoning of price-quality comparison. Design, therefore becomes a descriptive agent of socially accepted feature that indicates one's identity.

An individual's style has become a defining aspect of their characteristics, style reflects their personality. A person's style is a code put together by oneself for others to decipher and discover who the person underneath that image is. On product attachment Govers and Mugge cite:

Sirgy (1982) suggested in his self-congruity theory that consumers make a psychological comparison between their self-concept and the image of a product. If a person identifies with this product image, (s)he will experience high self-congruence which positively influences product evaluation. The effect of self-congruence is assumed to originate from our need to express a consistent and positive view of our self. Products can serve as means by which an individual can symbolically display his/her self-concept to oneself and to others (Govers and Mugge, 2007).

The monopolistic hegemony of industrial society, where the exchange value predominates over the use value (Adorno, 1991), utilizes design to create illusion of individualism. Individualism as such is fashioned methodically, to feed on the upgrading of technological advances, and to reflect these advances in aesthetically pleasing forms which express individual identity. Identity, however, is subject to change constantly in keeping up with the sociocultural agenda, mirrored in social individual's place in the progress visual media. In the contemporary age of consumerism, one of the most crucial mediums in this progress is product design.

Baudrillard argues, objects are no longer objects, but offered products of sign systems; and that the conclusive system of sign value of objects constitutes the logic of consumption (Baudrillard, 1996).

Barthes' perspective in exploring the nature of advertisement, suggested that advertisements connote social aspects highlighted in the formation of the image. Barthes states that signs, and therefore connotations compose the messages of the advertisement, with textual utterance fine tuning the message. (Barthes, 1973) The utility of the object, in this sense, becomes the connotation of the technology behind its operational sequence, and therefore fades within the myth of technological update, as opposed to existing as the sole purpose of its existence. Thus, echoing in the Marxist perspective, exchange value exceeds and abolishes use value. Similarly, Baudrillard asserts that industrial society knows only the product, not the object; which begins truly to exist at the time of its formal liberation as sign function: "...the object is not a thing, nor even a category; it is a status of meaning and a form." (Baudrillard, 1996).

Donald Norman argues that every individual is a designer as soon as they start assembling their possessions to create an image of themselves.

Through these personal acts of design, we transform the otherwise anonymous, commonplace things and spaces of everyday life into our own things and places. Through our designs, we transform houses into homes, spaces into places, things into belongings. While we may not have any control over the design of the many objects we purchase, we do control which we select and, then, just how, where, and when they are to be used. (Norman, 2004)

One forms a design of oneself, to satisfy the need to create a subjective image that reflects one's identity, through assembling a series of objects –products obtained for their sign value (Norman, 2004). With reference to Baudrillard's interpretation of product, the individual, thus, attempts to form a sign of his / her own. As referred to previously, Barthes' syntagms of object assemblages are dynamic in their existence and are updated by the sociocultural agenda as well as the alterations in the individual's mental, emotional and ideological state. Consumer, surrounding himself with objects that satisfy his desire to visualize a comprehensible self-concept, will utilize these objects on their functions in order to justify his need to own them. Therefore, the assemblage of belongings, in Norman's terms, create personalities out of individuals, places out of spaces and so on; and interaction with these objects, ( the frequency of interaction can be added for that matter), brings about a dynamic self-display, hence constant communication of self. Communication via

self-display in various social environments is to be investigated in order to form an understanding of its role in social nonverbal communication.

Baudrillard argues that a sign assumes meaning through its relation to other signs (Baudrillard, 1996). Projecting the creation of individual-image composed of personal assemblage to the individual's social interaction, it can be said that individuals form a coherent icon of themselves to communicate with the other members of society. Individual is in constant attempt to belong to social groups, to complete the individual identity, and gain access by presenting a comprehensive subjective image that conforms to the norms of the specific group. The attempt to achieve subjectivity, in the Lacanian sense emerging from the need to unify the divided being, drives the individual to form an image, one that conceals the divided being. Subjective image requires the object of desire, *objet petit a*, one that the individual unconsciously avoids reaching, all the while desiring to do so (Žižek, 2000). Capitalist hegemony presents material forms of the desired object, under the title *designed product* (İlhan, 2006). The power of design is to portray any extent the manufacturer prefers its customers to comprehend their self-conception is and reflect it on material artifacts. Consumer, in this sense, willing to complete the subjective image, constantly acquires these promised objects. Nonetheless, the obtained object ceases to be the promised one, it ceases to satisfy the urge at the moment it is acquired. Moreover there appears another on the market that is aesthetically, technologically or expressively upgraded. The inefficiency of the Symbolic in referring to the Real provides the material with the opportunity to upgrade the object, constantly pledging to enhance meaning and subjectivity. Dyer's following excerpt from H. M. Enzenberger, which he utilized to draw the concept of utopia, supports such an argument: "Consumption as spectacle contains the promise that want will disappear. The deceptive, brutal and obscene features of this festival derive from the fact that there can be no question of a real fulfillment of its promise. ...Consumption as spectacle is – in parody form – the anticipation of a utopian situation." (Dyer, 1992) The constant desire to visualize oneself results in acquiring the designed item that assures the completion of *the* image, which is in constant advance with new inserts, all of which prove to be inadequate compared to a better one on the market. The individual appropriates a display, the self-display: the set of signifiers of self.

The assemblage of self-concept reflects an individual narrative: deciphering the image of a person, results in a gradual succession of discovering an actual character, with a state of mood, personality features, a social status, an occupation,

a dwelling etc. This particular ability of consumers has long been known to the designer; it's the designer's clue to getting to know who he is supposed to address a particular design decision, it's his only way to construct identity or reinforce it. Designer deciphers his consumers through their image -the assembly that is their personality-, read through their daily routine, put together the information to give them an experience that is missing in their lives(see Buchanan et. al, 2007). On the other end of this process, consumers decipher the designed product; notice the personality which it mirrors, and include it in (or dismiss from) their life, their combination. The communication between designer and consumer is accomplished. However, the reading of individual narratives is a continuous process when the immediate question of the purpose of designing an image of oneself is answered. Taking for granted that utility one of the major necessities of design, what is the utility of designing an image that reflects one's personality? The answer corresponds to the product designer – product consumer communication; it is the need to express oneself. On one end, there is the consumer-designer who communicates a series of information, on the other end there is addressed audience who receives the signal and decodes the set of information to discover the underlined individual narrative.

Unlike the product designer, however, the expression of individual narrative as the sole purpose of consumer-designer's creation results in a paradigm shift. The assembly, the image that surrounds one's personal space as well as one's body, turns the consumer into the product: As the consumer becomes his own designer, he designs himself to be deciphered, his creation reflects his identity and at once he becomes the product itself. Identity is materialized and, vice versa, the product is identified. A product is the indicator of many features only one of which is the consumer identity. (Fig 4.1)

The product design process involves a significant criterion: Corporate identity. An industrial design product is born to life with manufacturer. A designer will be employed by a firm, a corporation or now and then an individual. In any case (even when the designer is designing for himself), the product will require a distinctive quality that represents the employer which is called corporate identity. When the product is to be included in the line of brand, corporate identity shares the dominance of this aspect with brand identity. Brand identity is in correspondence, but not entirely the same as corporate identity. Research shows that consumers favor products with brands that match their personality over products with brands that are not inadequate at congruence (Aaker, 1999). The overlapping of brand-



congruence and product-congruence results in emergence of brand personality. More and more, consumer society develops into a population dominated by brand personalities.



**Figure 4.1.** “Nike Women” Billboard Advertisement



**Figure 4.2.** Winners of Nike’s “Dance to L.A.” Competition (Turkey)



Another aspect of product design is the ability of containing a visual narrative. A product intrinsically includes a story, a process of its own, its own visual narrative, in addition to its owner's individual narrative. As Donald Norman describes a typical morning in the bathroom getting ready, he writes about his revelation that every single design offers him a suggestion: As I looked over the bathtub and shower, wondering where to put the soap, I realized that the design was talking to me. "Put the soap here," ... took one glance at the towel rack at the side, lined with towels, all appealing to me: "take me," each appeared to say. His revelation was that this communication was in fact the communication with designers of these products (Norman, 2005).

Norman is perceptive in his observations regarding product design; his arguments are mostly valuable in that they reflect consumer's perspective. That is in fact what the designer tends to communicate: I have chosen this particular detail because the consumer will be more convenient than the other alternative, and he will purchase this product because of it. Norman states that Design is not only about utility but also communication: Each placement of an object, the choice of materials, the addition of hooks, handles, knobs, and switches, is both for utility and for communication.

What follows is that the designer also communicates a sequence. Every single object carries with it an operational sequence, both materially and mentally. In the course of the operation of a product becoming second nature consumers get accustomed to details, properties of materials, figuring out what kind of a process causes the outcome. In Donald Norman's article "We Are All Designers" (Norman, 2003), within the submissions to an experiment what is your favorite product, an answer states:

I just got a souvenir mug; its decoration only becomes visible when it contains a hot drink, though: it's covered with heat-sensitive glazing that is dark purple-blue at room temperature and below but becomes transparent when hot. It's even practical: one look and I know when my coffee is no longer drinkable (Norman, 2003).

The logic and technology behind a product become clear through experience and consumers start the process even before purchasing. The process continues with spectator progress. Once consumers are utilizing their products, assembling a unique design in the form of a combination of products, they create a designer out of themselves and they address *their consumers* who are out there: members of their community. These consumers are the ones that only perfect the mental operational sequence: they read the design and communicate with the designer. This particular

design is for communication, its sole utility is its ability to illustrate a point of view, a piece of mind, a specific mood or just plain character.

Referring back to Norman's statement, when consciously, deliberately rearranging objects (...) we are designing. Through these personal acts of design, we transform the otherwise anonymous, commonplace things and spaces of everyday life into our own things and places. Through our designs, we transform houses into homes, spaces into places, things into belongings (...) (Norman, 2003) another point emerges; designing one's own environment produces a genuine intimacy toward the produced assemblage as a part of one's identity, a part of personality, adding creativity into the long list of characteristic features.

This is a constant process. With design profession becoming increasingly popular, as its association to creativity, consumers are no longer unconscious designers. Consumers of today are creative, organized and conscious. Even attempts of disregarding the tendency turns into a design process: *What type of dining set defines me as a person?*

Production, industrial process, is shaped by a designer into aesthetically pleasing forms. To a certain extent this sounds like a definition of an industrial designer who is also responsible for shaping products into pleasing forms... An industrial designer trying to make a toaster attractive must design within fairly strict parameters. No matter how seductive the externals, if the bread does not come out toasted, the design fails. Production designer apart from its service to the script (itself a subjective, literary, artistic product) does not have to consider utility (Tashiro, 1998).

On the contrary novelty designer artifacts such as Philip Starck's Juicy Salif, manifests the contemporary status of design at this junction of utility. Tashiro echoes the infamous dictum by Sullivan that 'form follows function'. ( Fig 4.3)



**Figure 4.3.** "Juicy Salif" by Philippe Starck

Within the functionalist perspective, this had been indeed a popular tendency; however in an environment where a single product is subject to comparison to its endless alternatives utility loses significance among other aspects of product design. John Heskett argues that

Function in design became widely interpreted in terms of practical utility, with the conclusion that how something is made and its intended consumer should inevitably be expressed in the form. This omitted the role of decoration and how patterns of meaning can be expressed through or attached to forms. In this respect, it is possible to speak of an alternative dictum: 'Form follows fiction'. In other words, in contrast to the world of nature, human life is frequently inspired and motivated by dreams and aspirations rather than just practicality (Heskett,2002).

Contrary to Tashiro, Heskett states that function of a product design is twofold: utility and significance. While utility serves the purpose of practicality, significance serves the purpose of meaning assigned to product form. An interesting case of Volkswagen Beetle timeline exemplifies a number of arguments. Heskett illustrates the shift of significance over time as follows:

... Volkswagen Beetle, developed in the 1930's Germany on the direct orders from Adolf Hitler, himself a motoring enthusiast. With the production of the first prototypes in 1937, by the 'Strength Through Joy' section of the German Labour Front, the official workers of the organization, it was promoted as an icon of the achievements of the Nazi Party. When production recommenced on a large scale after the Second World War, the VW was successfully exported to the United States in the 1950s and became a cult object. The design was virtually identical across this period of time, but the significance of the product underwent a remarkable transformation: from an icon of fascism in the 1930s—the Strength through Joy car – the loveable 'Bug' and the hero of Walt Disney's Herbie films in 1960s America. The transformation went further with the redesigned Beetle that appeared in 1997, which also rapidly acquired cult status in the United States (Heskett, 2002).

The transformation of iconography illuminates the shift between utility and significance not only for the shift of iconography adequately stated by Heskett, but also for the principal reason of Beetle's existence in the first place. The order by Adolf Hitler clearly stated that a car was to be designed for the average working German Family: that was affordable of less than a thousand Marks and would . The efficiency at accomplishing this goal was what made this particular automobile an icon of Nazi Party. The utility was twofold: low-cost and functionality. And after it advanced through America, its visual features and probably the low-cost aspect progressed into one of the most iconic era's of twentieth century. The aesthetic

features of the Beetle stood for an intimate relationship rather than the vain looking automobiles that highlighted corporate identity to relate to, the VW Bug of 1967 was an icon of the hippie movement, becoming a cult car reminiscent of the movement. (Minkoff, 2002).

## 4.2 Cinematic Representation of Identity

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's interpretation of the symbolic value of Nuer's spear<sup>1</sup> is furthered by the momentary representation of a given feature of self in a given present time. (see Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p.49) A person's use of an object for the first and / or frequenting the usage of it is likely to generate an accelerated attachment, in addition to identifying self-image. Such an impact of an object in a person's life is very often portrayed Hollywood films. The impact is self-confidence, femininity, mobility, change in lifestyle, economical status etc., illustrated by a change self-image and image of fictional space.

Mary Ann Doane discusses the masquerade as simulating a gap or distance between the woman and her image: i.e. in her formulation, the masquerade is what, ironically, *allows* representation to take place. 'The masquerade doubles representation; it is constituted by a hyperbolization of the accoutrements of femininity [. . .] we are watching a woman demonstrate the representation of a woman's body.' (Handyside, 2003).

Handyside analyses the star image of Audrey Hepburn through her frequent portrayal of characters that experience a transformation self. The careful construction of her femininity is emphasized through scenes such as those in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* where she dresses herself (and transforms herself) in front of an amazed George Peppard. 'Hollow in itself, without substance, femininity can only be sustained by its accoutrements, decorative veils, and inessential gestures.' In Hepburn's films, the allegedly 'authentic' self is revealed through, and only through, (a series of) masquerade(s) (Handyside, 2003).

Hollywood films frequently portray the transformation of female identity from the spectator to the object of the spectacle. The transformation requires a certain development in visual quality, even though the development is actually a mental one. Although the audience is subject to a parade of feminine vogue, complete with costumes, accessories, shoes, purses etc., they are aware of the fact that the

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<sup>1</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton interpret Evans-Prachet's account of the culture of Nuer where spear has an important place even though Nuer are not hunters.

change of matter is actually a mental one, which is portrayed by the mimicry of the actress.

What film is parading, then, are the collection of masks the female protagonist has gotten accustomed to wear, which gives her the confidence to act in the so-called transformation identity; thus as the mask allows representation, it not only allows the representation of the new self in visual, the dressed female body, it also allows acting out the new self. Edgar Morin's conception of the mask, leads to the notion that all performances of personality require a certain placement of mask.

Morin argues that the mask/performance does not replace the self, but is part of the self. The performance indeed is seen by Morin as the way in which the self is made present in the world and also the mask which allows one's real voice to be heard (Handyside, 2003).

One of the latest cases is Devil Wears Prada:

Andrea, the protagonist of Devil Wears Prada, decides to go under a makeover to gain confidence in her workspace; once its done, she enters the office in a pair of *Channel Boots* – which are evidently of great significance in the surrounding - with a noticeable confidence. Although she had graduated with a degree in journalism, and bearing an impressive resume, she is undermotivated, frequently ridiculed and undermined in her workplace for her lack of taste in fashion. After the makeover she immediately develops a sense fashion, and masters her occupation, being the assistant to *the boss from hell*, Editor in Chief of the ultimate fashion magazine Runway. The extremity of this change is inserted by the evidently infamous Chanel Boots. ( Fig 4.4)



**Figure 4.4.** Andrea in Chanel Boots, *Devil Wears Prada* (2006)

Nevertheless, as every aspect of critical representation in cinema, the visual clues of this concrete transformation need repetition in order to establish a reinforced ground. To demonstrate the ability handle the pressure of a collection of masks is stronger than to demonstrate that she is able to hold one mask over her identity. Thus, within a continuous, choreographical montage sequence of Andrea's morning ritual, the film illustrates her performance within this newly acquired style/ability/profession visualized in a series of outfits, her new collection of masks. The sequence tells the audience that Andrea has now mastered the requirements of owning this collection, and it is her duties which are now to be, and probably already are, conquered.



**Figure 4.5.** Andrea before (*left*) and after (*right*) transformation (Devil Wears Prada , 2006)

The masquerade does not start at the beginning of the transformation. In the Morinian sense, it is already present. As the individual chooses objects that are representative of his/her personality, individual becomes the designer of his/her own mask, through their lifetime a series of masks. And, resembling the designer who is the first consumer to experience and to master the usage of his/her product, the individual masters the masquerade. Hence, even before the transformation, there were masks of importance, and as Andrea realizes that she does not wish to pursue the *Runwayesque masquerade* she goes back to her previous collection. Films of such narrative content contain an analogous revelation causing a reversal in transformation in the end: for the better in moral conscience.

The narrative of transformation–revelation structure of such films does not always follow the spectator-turned- spectacle path. The Roman Holiday (Wyler, 1953), for instance, shows the transformation of a royal character into a regular citizen for a short period. In this case of reverse transformation, however, the spectacle of the princess is one that is outside the royal lifestyle. She is reminiscent of the absent experience of being the average Jane of middle-class social life. Nevertheless, the larger population of the object of her desire, speculates on her original surrounding.



Another type of masquerade common in Hollywood is the disguise transformation. In action films with a storyline that elaborates a criminal activity, disguise and activity equipment transforms the characters involved. In *Jackal* the audience witnesses many fake identities of the assassin portrayed by Bruce Willis. *Jackal* makes extensive use of accessories which denote his attempt to pass through international gates as an imaginary person. Passport photos are edited into these sequences for reinforcement of the notion. ( Fig 4.6, Fig 4.7)



**Figure 4. 6.** Jackal, at the airport with a false identity (*The Jackal*, 1997)



**Figure 4. 7.** Jackal with another false identity (*The Jackal*, 1997)

In *Ocean's Eleven*, Daniel Ocean, recruits a team of eleven con artists to rob a well-known Hotel tycoon, Terry Benedict. The characters frequently ease into the hotel which contains the vault that is planned to be robbed. Daniel Ocean, the former husband of Tess who is the love interest of Terry Benedict, is not in disguise as he is a known former convict. However, as he leads the team in active participation as



the robbery starts off, the audience see two wrist watches on Daniel Ocean, completely dressed in black. ( Fig 4.8)



**Figure 4. 8.** Ocean wears two wrist watches to a robbery (Ocean's Eleven, 2001)

Two watches on a man's wrist immediately brings the two lives he lives parallel. Daniel poses as a customer in Terry Benedict's hotel, who suspects Daniel's is planning a scheme.



**Figure 4. 9.** Daniel Ocean (Ocean's Eleven, 2001)

Daniel is a man of elegance; his pose requires to be at its best. Thus the black wrist watch that has high precision is higher up on his wrist to be concealed within his suit's sleeve whereas the gold framed white watch rests further down on his wrist, ready to flash at the end of his sleeve. In addition, Daniel is the protagonist of the film, his intention in robbing Terry Benedict is revealed to be the quest to win Tess' heart back. Thus, Daniel has two separate motives in robbing the vault, winning back his wife, and getting wealthy. Therefore, two actions are running parallel that require timing, convincing Tess, easing into the vault.

Transformation or alteration of a character in visual form, detailing with costume accessories and objects of utility a determined aspect of narrative is pointed out. The visual significances are encoded with such details so that the audience will subconsciously invest in a potential alteration. The act of subconscious perception derives from the fact that design of a film, any given set, sets out to be true to reality and go unnoticed as an artificially built setting.

### **4.3 Personal Environment and Identity**

#### **4.3.1. Domestic Inhabitation and Identity**

A space can only be made into a place by its occupants. The best that the designer can do is put the tools into their hands (Harrison, S., & Dourish, P., 1996)

Undeniably, objects that compose and shape the interior design of personal spaces such as home and workspaces reflect an identity of their consumer. They invoke memory, attachment, self-expression and customization. As one of the outcomes of a survey conducted on the most cherished object at home, Csikszentmihalyi and Halgton (1981) state that: while the members of household state diverse reasons for cherishing a particular object at home over others, some types of reasons more typical of some classes of members than others; children generally state enjoyment and egocentricity, while adult women state social networks and men stress accomplishment and abstract ideals and elderly members stress memories and ties to family and past events. Such a similar generalization can be seen in the design of interior that emphasize the authority of these members, for instance children's territory usually emphasize entertainment. An accumulation of objects that revoke the sense of attachment as such create desired personal spaces.

Charles Tashiro states that objects enable individual to interact with spaces. The transition of any given space to personal space requires objects of attachment, spaces are designed by inhabitants through placement, customization and attachment. Don Norman describes the transition as:

Determining a desirable arrangement of belongings is often more a process of evolution than of deliberate planning. We make continual small adjustments. We might move a chair a bit closer to the light and place the books and magazines we are reading near the chair. We bring over a table to hold them. Over time, the furniture and the belongings are adjusted to fit the inhabitants. The arrangement is

unique to them and their activities. As activities and inhabitants change, so too does the arrangement of the house (Norman, 2005).

This particular self arrangement of home connotes to a certain territoriality. Although the word home connotes to a secure and intimate space, home itself is divided into certain territories. These sections though primarily named by their function such as bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom and so on, a certain personalization occurs by placing items of individual signification. Bathrooms display color coded toothbrushes, kitchens display appliances and artifacts that indicate a certain decision regarding their ownership, bedrooms signify privacy through their display of a precise décor of dwelling.

Csikzentmihalyi and Halgton state:

The extent to which the physical environment is elaborated with communicative signs that reveal the specific characteristics of the inhabitant is, with language, one of the distinguishing features of human life. Although we live in physical environments we create cultural environments within them. (Csikzentmihalyi & Halgton, 1981)

The interaction with the physical space and reshaping it into an individual / collective place takes a second turn with the cultural background of its inhabitants. As Csikzentmihalyi and Halgton point out, aside from the requirements of dwelling, economy and geography, shaping and designing home depends on the cultural features inhabitants involve in their living environment such as tradition, religion, ideology etc.

In this sense the home becomes the most powerful sign of the self the inhabitant who dwells within (Csikzentmihalyi & Halgton, 1981)

This particular sign of self, interior design personalized by objects that define a path of interaction indicate a specific attachment or display memory is one of the basic principles of character visualization in production design. Identification of a character occurs at the most personal level, as with other forms of design that are formed in order to define the character, spectators decipher the character in their personal environments in order to comprehend the aspects of their identity. The protagonist of The Matrix, Thomas Anderson is first seen in his studio apartment, the sequence is the key scene where the audience is introduced to his search and the party searching for him, with the most explicit references of the films to main motifs.



**Figure 4.10.** Thomas Anderson, in his apartment, in his search (Matrix, 1999)

As the camera tracks through a specifically untidy apartment, the audience meets the protagonist of the film. Thomas Anderson is seen at his home, in front of his computer station, which holds extensive amount of external devices that manifest the character's extensive know-how on computer technology. The computer station being the most crowded area indicates that he spends most of his time at home in front of this station. The next shot reveals that he had fallen asleep in midst of a far-reaching search.



**Figure 4.11.** Thomas Anderson's apartment, wide angle (Matrix, 1999)



**Figure 4.12.** Anderson, on nightly mission to search for Morpheus (Matrix, 1999).

Thomas Anderson has fallen asleep while searching for a mysterious man through press releases and other sources. His computer switches to a messaging mode without his authority and he is distracted from his sleep. The messages direct him to follow *the White Rabbit*, one of many references to Alice in Wonderland. His headphone reads Panasonic.



**Figure 4.13** Thomas Anderson's book, Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, is a secret container. (Matrix, 1999)

The sequence also reveals that Thomas Anderson functions as an underground programmer who produces blackmarket programs for an underground client profile. His products are hidden in a hardcopy book, no other than Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*.



**Figure 4.14.** Simulacra and Simulation holds the product of Anderson's blackmarket produces (Matrix, 1999)

The sequence ends with Anderson's realization that the white rabbit is a tattoo one of his clients sport.



**Figure 4.15.** Anderson awakes from what he believes is a nightmare (Matrix, 1999)

The information provided by the setting of Anderson's apartment reveals that Thomas Anderson is efficient in computer programming, spends his time in front of his computer, prefers Panasonic electronics, he is preoccupied with an intensive search and has an illegal side job. His studio apartment reveals a compact living environment that connotes to his nonconformist ideology, with his computer station

taking up most of the space with expensive equipment and his contradicting the indication that he is not able to afford more space.

His computer station, shot directly from above in a detailed view, reveals to be the most personalized and focused area of his apartment. An old keyboard is replaced with a new, upgraded ergonomic version, the table is wide and angled at three corners for the owner to be able to hold many occupational artifacts at once at his reach. His legal day job, is in fact computer programming, however is to be revealed later.

#### **4.3.2. Workspace and Identity**

As home connotes to privacy and individualism personalization is inevitable, workspace personalization is less intense restricted or nonexistent at times. An extensive summary of psychological research on effects of personality on individual preferences and uses of the physical environment by Wells and Thelen reveals the outcome and emergence of environmental personology.

“This line of research has revealed many differences in environmental preferences and uses based on personality factors. One such personality factor is introversion-extraversion: Research suggests that extraverts require greater environmental stimulation than introverts (Eysenck, 1981). In addition, individuals with an internal locus of control often try to manipulate and master the environment, whereas individuals with an external locus of control are more passive and resigned to the environment (Little, 1987) ... In fact, personalization of workspace has been found to serve many psychological functions for employees, primarily self-expression. Personalizing workspaces with personal items serves to express people's personality, emotions, status within the company, and group memberships outside the office (Duncan, 1973; Konar & Sundstrom, 1986; Scheiberg, 1990; Sundstrom, 1986; Wells, 2000). The manner in which people personalize can also regulate privacy and social interaction by indicating whether they prefer to be alone or with others (Altman, 1975; Brown, 1987). Many employees also report that personalizing their space makes the place more pleasing, provides humor and whimsy (Carrère & Evans, 1994; Carrère, Evans, & Stokols, 1991), and helps the employees cope with stress (Scheiberg, 1990; Wells, 2000) and exert control over their environments (Edney & Buda, 1976).” (Wells, M. & Thelen, L, 2002).

The summary of the research above shows that personalization at workplace depends on more variables than personalization at home. The psychological determinants such as stress, need of control, and personality traits such as

introversion, sociability determines the level of personalization along with office regulations.

**Table 4.1** Personalization at workplace Statistics (Well and Thelen, 2002)

	Factors						
	Communalities <sup>a</sup>	Friends	Arts	Activities	Intellect	Loved	Senses
Friends and/or coworker items							
Relationships with others	.85	.75	.14	-.03	.21	.41	.22
Friends	.58	.70	.08	.23	.12	.09	-.10
Coworkers	.73	.84	.08	.08	-.08	.02	.12
The arts items							
Artwork	.64	.06	.62	.23	.44	.11	-.04
Music and theater	.64	.29	.71	-.16	-.12	.03	.10
Entertainment	.70	.02	.82	.11	.10	.06	.14
Cartoons	.56	.05	.70	.14	.13	.04	-.19
Activities items							
Sports	.75	-.02	.04	.81	.05	.15	.24
Hobbies	.72	.48	.05	.67	-.03	-.15	-.10
Trinkets	.65	.11	.14	.78	.12	.04	-.01
Intellect items							
Reading	.49	-.07	.10	.05	.60	-.12	.35
Values	.62	.30	.09	-.07	.68	-.02	-.23
Achievements	.53	.07	.07	.17	.64	.17	.22
Loved ones items							
Family	.62	.32	.18	.06	.10	.59	.35
Romantic partners	.57	.39	-.10	.11	.31	.55	.02
Pets	.68	.05	.20	.29	.20	.55	-.47
Bring pets to work	.45	-.02	-.09	-.05	-.14	.65	.01
Senses items							
Music machines	.41	.31	.28	.28	.08	-.12	.37
Plants	.51	.06	.07	.10	.19	.14	.66

The table above shows the results of the research conducted by Well and Thelen with 323 employees participating by filling questionnaires. The categories of items that are involved in personalization are listed with connections to the participant's attached notion of the item. ( Table 4.1)

Overall results of the research indicate that employees' personalization of their workspaces is predicted by the company's personalization policy and by employee characteristics such as status, workspace, tenure, and hours worked. Personality is associated with these employee characteristics, but it alone is not directly associated with personalization. Employee characteristics mediate the relationship between personality and personalization ( Wells and Thelen, 2002).

Personalization in the workplace is a common activity, however the determinants of reveal that level and the contents of personalization in the workplace reveal various traits of the employee's identity such as status, personality, attachment and work hours as well as company characteristics such as personalization policy.

The office environment designs in contemporary Hollywood consist on status, company profile and worker's status. A stereotype of cubicle versus personal office space is an indicator of status in office environments. Aside from the work



environment that requires heavy construction equipment or contrary light work, a Hollywood film character as a member of the American Culture reveals his / her status and personality by the office environment and its contents, or the nonexistence of such. Affrons state that the office of Sam Spade in *Maltese Falcon* contains many of the trades of a private investigator, A desk, a filing cabinet, a telephone and a large leather chair, all which are existent in his home as well as the audience learns that Spade is a private investigator who needs to concentrate on his job continuously (Affron and Affron, 1995). The work environment in *The Matrix* reveals Thomas Anderson's legal job as a computer programmer in a respectable firm. ( fig 4.16)



**Figure 4.16.** Anderson questioned by his superior (*Matrix*, 1999).



**Figure 4.17.** Anderson's workspace, a cubicle (*Matrix*, 1999).

Anderson's first seen in the office sequence being questioned for being late, his superior's office has a high view of the city, a panoramic picture of a Metropolitan, tidy desk and extra seats for visitors. Lighting is natural as the office is lit by the daylight coming through windows on two sides. By the size of the office it is evident that Anderson's superior has a higher status than Anderson, however not very far high. Anderson's workspace however is a narrow cubicle, under artificial lighting, and very little personal items are seen (Fig 4.17). Anderson is perceived to be a regular employee, his status is not very far high, he seems to be either uninterested in his work environment or under heavy personalization constraints. Similar to the observation made by Affron and Affron on the interior designs of *Maltese Falcon*, it is evident that Thomas Anderson lacks space at his workspace as much as in his studio apartment. His desk is a similar work station with less extra equipment. Unlike his apartment, Anderson's workspace is tidy, suggesting that his work environment is strict with its regulations, reinforced by Anderson's body language in his superior's office.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Framework:

Structure is the principle of construction and the object of analysis, to be understood by its reference to the concepts of *system* and *value* as defined in Semiotics. Semiotics, the study of signs, or what Saussure called semiologie is a *science* that studies the role of signs as part of social life. ( Chandler, 2002) While not entirely a branch of science, semiotics consists of both theory and analysis of signs and signifying systems. Semiotics basically deal with how things signify and how things are perceived through signs. Ferdinand de Saussure, Swiss linguist, is the founder not only of linguistics but also of what is usually referred to as semiotics.

It is... possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeion*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. ( Saussure, 1974)

Although Saussure refers strictly to linguistics and Charles Peirce dealt with signs any given medium. Today the study of signs relate to not only literary analysis but also image analysis in various fields of study.

Signs are found in the physical form of words, images, sounds, acts or objects, depending on the sign vehicle ( material or physical form of the sign. ) A sign consists of a signifier which is a given form a sign assumes; and a signified which is the mental concept represented by the signifier.

**Table 5.1** Signifier – Signified relationship

Sign	
Signifier	Signified

While the relationship between a signifier and a signified is arbitrary, their correlation depends on a set of codes. Semiotic codes are procedural systems of related conventions for correlating signifiers and signifieds in certain domains. (Chandler, 2002)

Saussure identifies the relationship between a signifier and signified as arbitrary. Nonetheless while ontologically the arbitrariness stands, once socially or historically established a sense of conventionality is introduced to the study of signs. A given set of signified and signifier functions within certain codes that provide a framework for the given sign. Historical, social and cultural codes that signs function within require a level of learning in order to decode the sign.

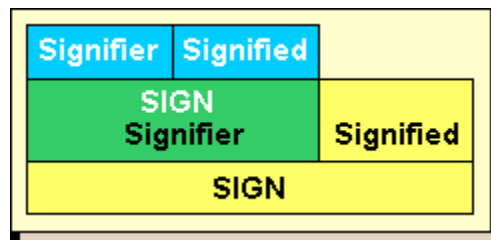
The relationship between the signifier and the signified depends on the nature of the signifier: There are two types of signifiers, denotative and connotative.

Denotation: usually described as the definitional, 'literal', 'obvious' or 'commonsense' meaning of a sign. In the case of linguistic signs, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide. Similarly, the denotation of a representational visual image is what all viewers would recognize the image as depicting. Denotative signifiers tend to directly point to the signified, being identified with the first meaning.

Connotative signifiers on the other hand, implicitly point to a signified; that is they convey meaning through a set of socio-cultural / ideological / historical associations that are available to a specific group of viewers who have the knowledge to make the associations. Connotation is open to interpretation while denotation is usually straightforward. In this sense denotation and connotation are levels of representation.

Roland Barthes coins an order of representation through the denotative and connotative nature of signifiers. The first order of signification is that of denotation: a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified. The second order of signification is that of connotation which employs the first order as its signifier and moves to a higher level of signification by signifying an additional signified.

**Table 5.2. Orders of signification**



Changing the form of the signifier while keeping the same signified can generate different connotations. Changes of style or tone may involve different connotations, such as when using different typography for exactly the same text. For instance language is commonly used as a denotative agent of communication in daily life, in literary practice elements of structure are often used to depict a higher level of meaning. Tropes such as metaphors and metonyms generate connotations. Some signs carry with them larger cultural meanings, usually very general; these are called, by Roland Barthes, "myths", or third-order signifiers.

Structuralism is primarily concerned with systems or structures rather than with referential meaning or the specificities of usage. Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of modern linguistics, was a pioneer of structuralist thinking. Structuralists regard each language as a relational system or structure and give priority to the *determining* power of the language system. Structuralism seeks to describe the overall organization of sign systems as 'languages'. Structuralism emphasizes the *whole* system - which is seen as more than the sum of its parts. It undertakes a systematic search for profound structures underlying the surface features of phenomena such as language, society, thought and behavior. Their textual analysis seeks to outline the codes and rules by comparing those perceived as belonging to the same system (e.g. a genre) and identifying constituent units. The analysis of specific texts seeks to break down larger, more abstract units into 'minimal significant units' via substitution, The search for underlying semantic oppositions is characteristic of structuralist textual analysis ( Chandler, 2002).

Following is a collection of ideas from various authors gathered together by Professor John Lye. The general principles of structuralist perspective derives from and analyses literature, however these principles have significant influence on image analysis.

1. Meaning occurs through difference. Meaning is not identification of the sign with object in the real world or with some pre-existent concept or essential reality; rather it is generated by difference among signs in a signifying system. For instance, the meaning

of the words "woman" and "lady" are established by their relations to one another in a meaning-field. They both refer to a human female, but what constitutes "human" and what constitutes "female" are themselves established through difference, not identity with any essence, or ideal truth, or the like ( Lye, 1996).

Lye refers the signifying system as the basis of meaning. By way of signs and their correspondence in a given signifying system one is able to interpret the meaning, a string of signs producing a meaningful content. Semiotics defines meaning in terms of the denotative and connotative associations produced as a reader decodes a given sign in relation to its contextual codes.

2. Structuralism notes that much of our imaginative world is structured of, and structured by, binary oppositions (being/nothingness, hot/cold, culture/nature); these oppositions structure meaning, and one can describe fields of cultural thought, or *topoi*, by describing the binary sets which compose them. ( Lye, 1996).

Binary oppositions are central to meaning production. As Lye describes, through binary oppositions fields of cultural thought and meaning can be defined. Film narrative uses this particular aspect in the construction of the fiction world. The structural base of the analysis illustrates in the following chapter how binary opposition is inserted and visualized.

3. Structuralism forms the basis for semiotics, the study of signs: a sign is a union of signifier and signified, and is anything that stands for anything else.

4. Central too to semiotics is the idea of codes, which give signs context -- cultural codes, literary codes, etc. The study of semiotics and of codes opens up literary study to cultural study, and expands the resources of the critic in discussing the meaning of texts. ( Lye, 1996).

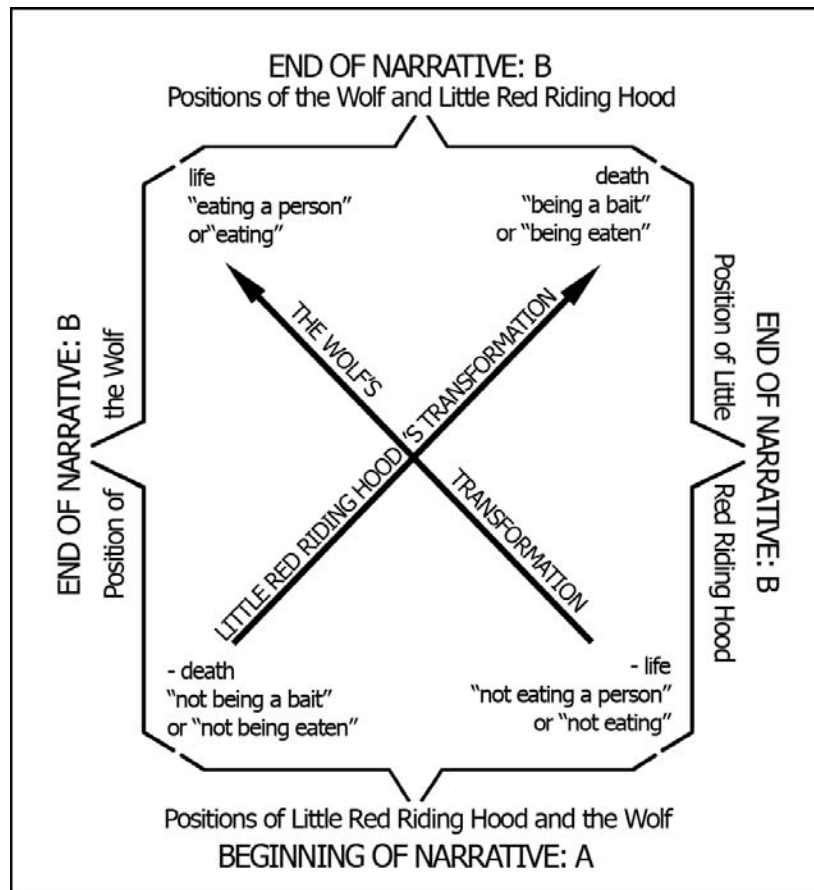
## **5.2 Methodology**

In order to compose a comprehensive understanding of visualization of character and setting in the visual narrative of film, content analysis of the production design elements in the feature film *Fight Club* ( Fincher, 1999) were outlined and analyzed.

*Fight Club* (1999, Fincher) was chosen for its portrayal of two main characters. Main duality of the narrative in *Fight Club* extensively relies on the rendering of two main characters, therefore analysis of visualization of these characters present an adequate outline of the narrative. In order to outline design elements that visualize the identity of

the characters, correspond and reinforce film narrative, a number of design settings were chosen and analyzed in comparison. Within these settings, critical design objects and design artifacts that stand out regarding their were selected to explore their significance regarding the identity of these two characters.

By definition a film is a motion picture; storytelling medium with continuous visual image. Therefore an analysis of written narrative to visual storytelling consisting solely of narrative analysis or solely of image analysis proves to be inadequate. The analysis will be twofold, the first stage consists of the analysis of the narrative content of the film in order to outline the characteristics that shape the two main characters and form a comprehensive conception of how the characters contrast one another and braid over through the course of the film. Rifat's model of analysis of the narrative structure will be employed as guide to the first stage of analysis. (Rifat, 1992). This model analyses the narrative in a series of sections to outline the main duality that serves as the binary opposition and it's representation through a course of events and interaction of characters.



**Figure 5.1** Main duality Chart of Little Red Riding Hood

The stage of outlining the characteristics of the main characters investigates their transformation between the beginning and the end. For the sake of limiting the study of this thesis to the design of characters this stage will be on the focus of the first part of the Analysis of Fight Club. A exemplifying analysis of Little Red Riding Hood by Rifat is as follows:

**Table 5.3** Rifat's Analysis of Little Red Riding Hood

<b>Subject<sup>1</sup> Little Red Riding Hood</b>	<b>Subject<sup>2</sup> Wolf</b>
Protagonist	Antagonist
Peasant Girl	Predatory
Beautiful	Sinister
Not familiar with Evil	Evil
Appreciated	Traitorous
Good	Evil
Innocence	Deviousness
Humanity	Animalism
<b>Setting<sup>1</sup> Human world</b>	<b>Setting<sup>2</sup> Animal World</b>

The second stage consists of frame by frame image analysis to investigate the correspondence of design elements to film narrative, construction of the identity of these two main characters that are the center of the main conflict. Four key design settings have been outlined due to their power of signification. These settings are drawn out through the film and express the personality traits and lifestyles that shape the characteristic features of the characters, the audience is then introduced to the gradual intersection of these features. Barthes' systematic image analysis of the magazine advertisement of Panzani will be employed as a guiding model at the second stage of this study.

Barthes employs a spectral analysis for the advertisement image to explore the messages it may contain. Barthes' method applies to this study in the parallel that Barthes finds advertisement image's signification completely and explicitly intentional.



Similarly in cinema image is completely and explicitly organized, the story of the film is told through auditory and visual signification.

Barthes defines the root of image as being close to the word "imitari": an imitation or representation; a copy. Thereon Barthes outlines the system of signification within a particular Magazine ad (one in which a mesh grocery bag lies on the table; its contents: beautiful, fresh vegetables and a box of pasta displaying a brand name) into three parts, that of the linguistic message, the coded iconic message, and the noncoded iconic message.



**Figure 5.2** Panzani Ad

### **Three Messages**

- The linguistic message
- A coded iconic message
- A non coded iconic message

## **The linguistic Message**

The linguistic message consists of captions, labels, explanations in the case of still image; in the case of filmic image linguistic message is delivered through dialogue and narration in the form of anchorage and relaying of the text. The significations encoded within this form of message require cultural knowledge. The investigation of linguistic message determines whether visual image supports, reinforces, goes beyond or simply duplicates the same information delivered by text.

### **Anchorage:**

Barthes calls the first function of the text "anchoring," in which the text helps the reader choose the right level of perception, or select the correct details to notice the viewer to choose the correct level of perception, directs not only identification but also interpreting gaze. The text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, remote controlling viewer towards a meaning chosen in advance.

Another function is relaying additional information: the text serves as a second, supplemental source of information, like dialogue balloons in comic strips, or auditory dialogues in films which is necessary for full comprehension of the image (rather than mere focusing of the image).

### **Coded Iconic Message**

As Barthes outlines the coded messages with respect to their symbolic value, the coded iconic message appears to be the totality of all of the messages that are connoted by the image itself.

- 1) Physical state of objects within a given composition serve as a sign that signifies and act, a preparation, a prior event or interaction.
- 2) Colors of objects and visual elements within the composition serve as signs that signify psychological, environmental connotations, ideological associations and other significations such as emotional response.
- 3) Inventory of objects signify a complete system, a complete experience, a totality of socio-cultural trend.

### **Non-coded Iconic Message : The literal visual message**

Barthes states that the non-coded iconic message is simply the literal "what it is" of the image. The photographic representation repeats rather than transforms the source

subject matter. It is a literal message as opposed to the previous symbolic ones, but it functions as the support of the symbolic messages.

This study will analyse four sets of images that belong to four groups of design settings. The linguistic messages and Coded Iconic messages will be outlined and interpreted for each group, while the noncoded iconic message will be analysed in general since the four groups belong to the same cinema film.

The first set of these key design elements is the explicit comparison of wardrobe of characters. Costume design is extensively associated with character personality in cinema; however narration in *Fight Club* reveals that clothing is deliberately associated with identity and individual's stand in society. Outfits introduce main characters to the audience while presenting explicit choices and styles, thereon forms an inevitable comparative image of the two characters. Therefore exploring the wardrobe of main characters will generate how their character traits are visually composed and how the comparison is made possible.

The second set of design elements is the domestic inhabitation of characters. Domestic lives of main characters are presented with all-embracing visual imagery so that the audience is able to compare the characters in their environment. The emphasis in protagonist's condo interior and the antagonist's mansion gives the audience the signs of protagonist's transformation through the course of the story. Therefore domestic inhabitation will be explored to identify the emergence of the protagonist's main conflict.

Third set is chosen as the occupation of characters. Occupational lives of main characters are given in a clear comparison within the narration, forming an understanding of how the protagonist earns his life and how his occupation affects his social activities. The antagonist's occupation on the other hand presents a plot twist and a contrast to that of the protagonist which will be explored in the following chapter.

The final set of design elements is the recreational activities of main characters. While the protagonist recreational activity is revealed to have resolved his psychological ailment for a brief period, the antagonist's recreational activity simply gives the film its title. Investigating and exploring these activities and their visualization reveals the contrast of the ideology of main characters and their psychological traits.

## 6. AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN *FIGHT CLUB*

### 6.1 Fight Club

Fight Club (Fincher, 1999) is a feature film adaptation of the novel Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk, screenplay adaptation by Jim Uhls and direction by David Fincher. Fight Club unfolds the story of an average white-collar American male figure, disillusioned by and detached from the society surrounding him. He suffers from insomnia and finds a brief cathartic experience in support groups which is cut short by a woman named Marla. His second experience is triggered subsequent to his acquaintance to Tyler Durden and unfolds unexpectedly when he faces his reality that he also suffers from multiple personality disorder.

Both the film and the novel carry ample motifs of Oedipal complex and anti-consumerism as a result of feminization of men in a dysfunctional matriarchal family (Palahniuk, 1999).

#### 6.1.1 Plotline:

Fight Club starts with a striking rapid opening sequence with the brainride that starts off in the brain pans through the skin to finally over a gun held into the protagonist's mouth. The narrator starts with an introduction to Tyler's Project Mayhem and the audience is taken to another rapid tour demonstrating the mechanism of the destruction planned. Next, for a proper introduction the protagonist takes his audience to the beginning and reveals that he has suffered from insomnia, that his job requires constant mobility and that his surrounding is composed of up-to-date consumer goods through and through. An incident of relief from insomnia is his attendance to support groups for terminally ill people, which later becomes an addiction. Through these support groups he spots Marla Singer, a support group tourist who reflects his lie. Once he is confronted with his reality, that he is not really dying but that he only absorbs the advantage of being *really listened to instead of being just a conversation-filler*, his sleep cycle is disturbed and he dives back in insomnia. His condition causes dissociation from his environment; he is disturbed by the constant mobility that his occupation requires, and his constant urge to

divulge in consumption. He meets Tyler Durden through one of his trips and after his apartment explodes he ends up living with Tyler. Soon Tyler and the protagonist start a fight club, moving from back alleys to a discreet basement. Fight Club quickly expands and franchises start to form throughout America while the protagonist adopts Tyler's mannerisms. As Fight Club upgrades to Project Mayhem, Tyler meets Marla and forms a physical relationship. Project Mayhem soon gets out of control, and Tyler seems to have left. In his search of Tyler, the protagonist comes face to face with the fact that Tyler is his creation slowly brought to life, his alter ego, subsiding Jack and surfacing as a genuine identity. It is then revealed that the protagonist has been living as two characters, being Tyler as he produces soap, poses as the founder of Fight club and working at night jobs; and being Jack the protagonist while he works as the recall coordinator and the victim of arson. The timeline of Fight Club turns out to be the gradual transformation of the protagonist to Tyler.

### **6.1.2 Narrative**

Fight Club follows a classical narrative outline with a few causal connections removed from the linear structure. There are three central elements emphasized in the narrative: Masculinity, Anti-consumerism and Insincerity in Contemporary Society.

#### **Male Identity:**

"It's time we produce books that serve men." ( Palahniuk, 1999)

The references to the identity of the male as the victim of emasculation, of a lifestyle ornamented with an obsession for consumption is clustered within the film.; the resolution to achieve catharsis being underground fight clubs with clear-cut rules. Tyler's comments on the Male identity are quite straightforward:

On Jack's disappointment over the explosion at his apartment:

Tyler Durden: Man it could have been worse a woman could cut off your penis and throw out the window of a moving car.

Tyler Durden: We are a generation raised by women, I'm thinking another one is really the answer we need.

Members of Fight Club are the generation of the post-Oedipal era; having been deserted by their father, they have been imprisoned into the feminized obsession of a contemporary lifestyle. Members of Fight Club struggle to retrieve their male identity

from the social conventions impaled on them, forcing them to get accustomed to contemporary circumstances and letting go of the survival instincts that shape a man's identity. Tyler's reluctance to die without a scar signifies his need to find his manhood through letting go of anger in the most primitive form: Fighting. Fight Club attempts to form the male identity by rebuilding the hunter-gatherer sense of survival instinct of men, ceasing the primitive sense of identity. Fight Club provides its members constant comparison between hunter-gatherer survival instincts of the male and the contemporary conformist male figure. Scars, bruises and muscle burns provide men with the true concrete physical signs of satisfaction in the attempt to lead them to the true identity of man.

### **Anti-consumerism:**

Jack exists in a universe where individuals are known either by their afflictions or by their possessions; they are segmented and classified, restricted by the capitalist axiomatic. ( Elliot, 2001)

The protagonist of Fight Club, addressed as Jack from here on, provides a stereotypical image with the background of an average American consumerist with the contemporary American dream. Jack's dysfunctional family dynamics, occupation, domestic habits, clothing preferences and consumption instincts draw an average American man with a career. Diken and Lautsen define the protagonist as:

Fight Club's protagonist, Jack (Edward Norton), is mobile: he has a career, travels in the space of flows, and fully but reflexively participates in consumerism. He is constantly on the move, yet his attitude toward his environment is blasé. As a spectator of his own life, he paradoxically lives in inertia in the midst of a mobile network society ( Diken, Lautsen, 2001).

Jack is a stereotypical consumer on surface, however as he narrates his story it becomes evident that he is dissatisfied with the state of life, he becomes the spectator of his own life as he watches it flow.

Palahniuk states that the film carries a copious message of anti-consumerism which is favorable compared to a subtle message if not none. ( Palahniuk CNN Interview, 1999)

Fight Club refers to the shortcomings of consumerist individual with its direct visual style, audacious use of brand-placement and narration which outlines the instincts of this particular society through a comparison of consumption and hunter-gatherer survival instincts.



**Figure 6.1.** IKEA Catalog, Fight Club

The infamous IKEA catalog sequence in the film demonstrates the domestic household of the protagonist with the enunciation of motives behind the choice of purchase of each item, complete with captions of their catalog names, price and additional merchandise information. David Fincher describes:

In the book he constantly lists his possessions, and we were like, How do we show that, how do we convey the culmination of his collecting things, and show how hollow and flat and two-dimensional it is? So we were just like, Let's put it in a catalog. So we brought in a motion controlled camera and filmed Edward walking through the set, then filmed the camera pan across the set, then filmed every single set dressing and just slipped them all back together, then used this type program so that it would all pan. It was just the idea of living in this fraudulent idea of happiness. There's this guy who's literally living in this Ikea catalog ( Fincher, 2000).

Dialogs between Tyler and Jack in which Tyler mentors Jack into an anti-consumerist perspective are dressed with open criticism on consumerism, contemporary individual

and the insignificance of consumption oriented dwelling. There are constant references to mankind as another one of the organic species that are destined to vanish which are in keeping with the comparison of contemporary society and hunter-gatherer society. Tyler's view of consumerism is parallel to the emasculation of male identity. Consumption results in forming identities for consumers, constituting them through artifacts; whereas survival requires only basic needs. Two distinct experiences of losing one's identity that the protagonist has endured outlines this particular contrast: Jack listens to a patient of testicular cancer revealing to the support group that he has divorced and his ex-wife is pregnant with her new husband. It is outlined that this member of the Remaining Men Together support group has lost his ability to reproduce, has therefore lost his sense of manhood, within the struggle he also lost his family, although he is fighting to *Remain a Man*. A comparative second experience is the explosion of his house. All his belongings are destroyed; *the dining set that defines him as a person* has vanished, the wardrobe that granted him a respectable exterior has been destroyed. As he describes his loss, his dialogue with Tyler is straightforward:

Tyler: A duvet is a blanket. Why do guys like you and I know what a duvet is? Is it essential to our survival in a hunter-gatherer sense of the world? What are we then?

Jack: Consumers

Tyler: Right, we are consumers; we are the by-products of a lifestyle obsession ... Things you own, end up owning you (Fight club, 1999).

Jack's experiences at support groups where he meets terminally ill patients grant him a perspective of identity and a comparison between commodity and identity Jack's perspective thereon produces Tyler's ideology and his tutoring tirades. His experiences with Tyler utter the winning side of the comparison.

### **Pretense in Contemporary Society:**

As a sign to the protagonist's intentionally built distance from contemporary society, his name never surfaces. There is a significant contrast between the civil act of name exchanging and the absence of the name of the protagonist being uttered. This particular gap is frequently revisited in his visits to the support groups, providing himself a different name for each group, assuming an imaginary identity. This is evident in constant flashes of nametags in these groups. Palahniuk states:



I found myself sitting in group after group feeling really guilty about being the healthy person sitting there - "The Tourist". So I started thinking - What if someone just faked it? And I just sat in these things for the intimacy and the honesty that they provide, the sort of cathartic emotional outlet. That's really how the whole idea came together (Palahnuik, 2000).

Jack reveals to Marla why he is addicted to these support groups:

Narrator: When people think you're dying, they really listen to you, instead of just waiting for their turn to speak.

Jack's addiction comes from the cathartic experience of being able to cry in another member's embrace, the repressed anger towards his surrounding society relieved in an emotional reaction where he is certain somebody is sincerely listening. Without this simple act of letting go, he is unable to relieve insomnia.

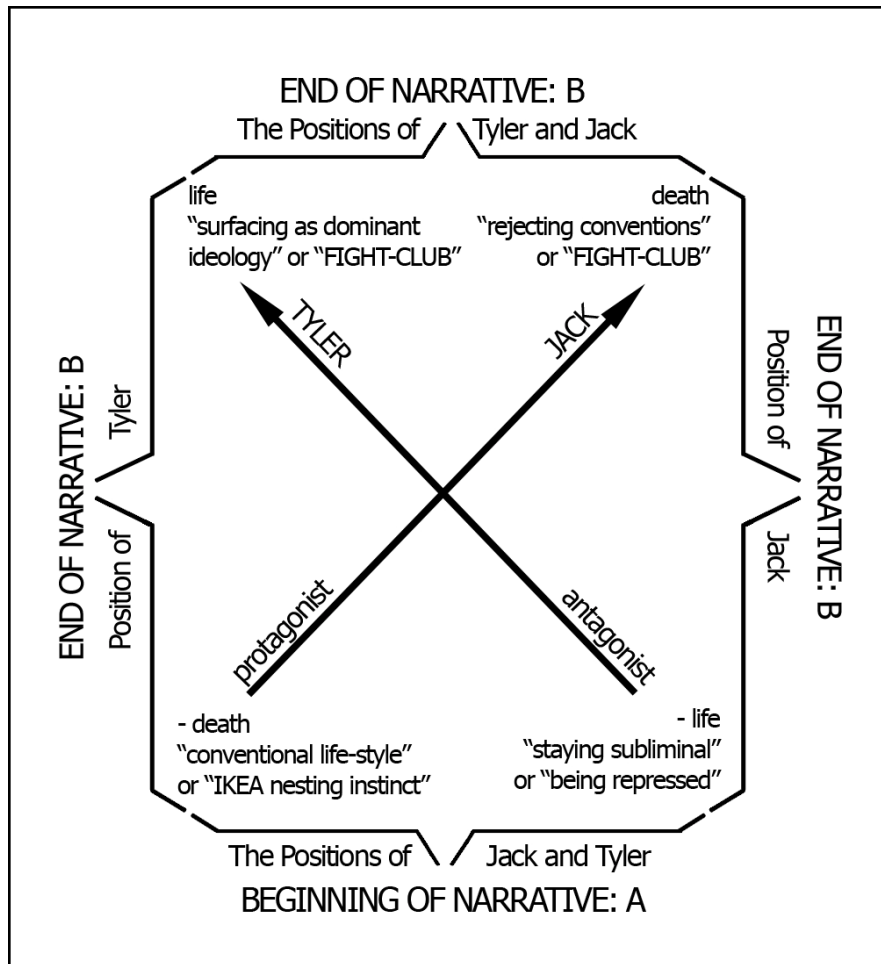
Another reference to this aspect is mirrored in the protagonist's tirade of his single serving life. His occupation as a recall coordinator for a major automobile company requires so frequent trips to accident sites by airways that he's able to verbalize the aspects of his life in airline terminology.



**Figure 6.2.**Single serving artifacts, single serving life (Fight Club, 1999)

Narrator: Everywhere I go, single serving life: Single serving cream, single serving sugar, cordon-bleu hobby kit ... the people I meet on each flight, they're single serving friends, between take-off and landing we have our time together.

After the unfolding of the plot twist, it is concluded almost natural that it is through one of these flights he chooses to materialize the image of his alter ego which resents almost every aspect of his life. Tyler emerges as a single serving friend who appreciates Jack's wit.



**Figure 6.3.** Main duality Chart of Jack and Tyler.

## 6.2 Canonical Narrative Structure

According to Bordwell's canonical narrative structure, a disturbance to the established state of affairs and characters in an undisturbed stage is the central reason for progress. Order / enigma / resolution sequence of classical narrative fits Fight Club, however the film claims a complex narrative structure, introducing a tripartite enigma into the protagonist's established state. Jack's first cathartic relief from insomnia is disturbed by Marla's introduction, his sleep cycle is interrupted by her presence acting as a mirror to his lie.

The explosion in his condo results in massive change in domestic habits when he moves in with Tyler. This alteration resolves as a gradual transformation in his ideology towards

life, his criticism of consumption is brought to life. As Jack realizes that Tyler is his alter ego, third and final enigma unfolds as Jack attempts to reverse Tyler's plans.

Another aspect of Bordwell's classical narration schemata is present in the storyline: Marla is the heterosexual love interest of Jack although he does not admit to it until very late into the film with the exception of a couple of vague comments (Fig 6.3). What is radical in this aspect is the portrayal of Marla, she is dirty, disorganized and completely lacks glamour. Her apartment reflects lack of sexual relations, poverty and depression. Her clothing preference is less of a matter of preference than a matter of affording.



**Figure 6.4** Marla Singer, Fight Club

The manifest element of narrative is the schizophrenia. Apart from his obvious ideological standpoint, Tyler as Jack's alter ego, is the most speculative character in terms of design. He has his own particular aesthetic quality and a sense of fashion which, although he ideologically declines as a concept, he fully serves with his radical choice of color, his complete accessorizing habit. At the very point we are introduced to him formally, he is straight-forward, observing and visually contradicting the protagonist. With his maroon leather jacket and red eyewear, he has a distinct and dynamic style. His choice of clothing stands out in every following frame he is in as his radical ideology on consumer society. His living environment strictly unique, he lives in a rotting mansion, with minimum amount of long obsolete objects for survival needs, overused beds, stove, and refrigerator, worn out mattresses. All of which outline the nihilistic and extraordinary

characteristics of his lifestyle and ideology which turn out to be the repressed subconscious of the protagonist.



**Figure 6.5** Tyler Durden, Fight Club

Jack, the narrator, is an average single man on the verge of a psychological breakdown. He works for as a recall coordinator for an automobile company, slightly at a better position than working in a cubicle, he is decent, organized, easy-going non-smoker. He is evidently unsatisfied with his identity, since he produces several false names on name tags at support groups. His support groups are the only organized places that grant him consciousness.

He furnishes on a selective brand that is an imitation of IKEA as the infamous Furni catalog scene suggests. He has a very respectable wardrobe composed of designer suits. As he reveals that he suffers insomnia it is clear that he is depressed with his life, the constant imposition of consumption and with the fact that he is detached from a surrounding of insincere society. He is constantly tense with the exception of his support group activity which gradually vanishes when he meets Tyler; his outfits get looser, his living habits change as he adapts to living at the Paper Street mansion.



**Figure 6.6** Jack, the protagonist Fight Club, 1999

Fight club's protagonist is a schizophrenic whose alter ego is neo-luddite who rejects consumer society and its merchandise which takes over the recessive consumer. Its plotline constantly underlines the problematic notions of contemporary society focusing on men as brainwashed stereotypical consumers who masturbate through commodities until the protagonist protests the anarchist methods of his own resolution to the extremity of his physiological limits. Its portrayal of this contemporary society is fierce, sarcastic, dark and euphoric. Its declaration is straightforward as uttered by its protagonist: *This is your life and it's ending one minute at a time, but the things you own end up owning you.*

The apparent psychological feature of such men is the Oedipal complex resulting in hatred toward their fathers, who were once their models for God and who fled. Thus, their bringing up had been taken on by their mothers, whom they blame for their compulsion for consumption for trivial artifacts.

### **6.3 Analysis of Production Design in Fight Club**

#### **6.3.1 Analysis of the Narrative Codes of Characters**

Fight Club offers a wide descriptive representation of its characters through the perspective of its protagonist who narrates throughout the entire film. As summarized above, the two main characters of the film are in complete contrast with each other at

every aspect of their respective lives. Their portrayal of two ends of the protagonist's conscience is outlined as shown in Table 6.1.

The protagonist immediately appears as the average middle aged American white collar male. He is considerably ordinary on the exterior, His job requires presentable appearance and he's working towards being a decent individual to fulfill the requirements of both his occupation and the standards of his income. His casual conversation with the company he meets on flights and his unannounced and seemingly unnoticed attendance at support groups for the terminally ill people signifies his adaptiveness within the social groups he is in. He is considerate of social and moral conventions of everyday life. His reluctance to hit Tyler when he asks to be hit, and his inability to adequately place a punch on Tyler's face are connotations his emasculated male identity.

His domestic environment as well as his workscape reveals to be contemporary fully furnished with up-to-date items and accessories, all of which along with his narrating description signify his conformist tendency. He is an average consumer that shapes a presentable exterior, through commodities that defines him as a individual. This exterior altogether is maintained updated and kept in harmony with other aspects of his life. His wardrobe compliments his occupation, his domestic belongings compliment one another in harmony, and they in keeping with the similar harmonious image of his friends. As the narration progresses it is revealed that this particular lifestyle is unsatisfactory for the protagonist, his anger towards the lack of fulfillment is repressed by his tendency to appear decent and psychologically stable. Insomnia triggers the repressed issues he has towards society and soon he creates his alter ego and switches consciousness with him.

The product of Jack's subconscious, his alter ego, Tyler Durden is the contrast portrayal of the protagonist. Tyler appears to choose a marginal exterior. As an individual who rejects all conventions of consumerist society, he prefers to stand out as an outcast within this particular society. His language, his mannerisms point out that he openly rejects the moral and social conventions of conformist standards. The assignments he distributes to the members of Fight Club and his intentional sabotages at his night jobs as outlined by the protagonist signify his temptation to challenge such conventions and create chaotic circumstances. He produces soap by recycling human fat at his house and sells to department stores. His occupation signifies his need to take control of his

stand in the cycle of consumption. He prefers to be an active producer rather than a blinded consumer. As he gets acquainted with Jack, Tyler sets out to bombard him with his ideology in life by parading his mannerisms and convert him to enlightenment, to transform him from a conformist to a primitivist. Tyler begins his mission by putting dynamite in Jack's condo.

**Table 6.1** Character chart of Fight Club

<b>Subject<sup>1</sup> Jack</b>	<b>Subject<sup>2</sup> Tyler</b>
Protagonist	Antagonist
Decent	Indecent
Ordinary	Marginal
Adaptive	Rebellious
Mindful	Oblivious
Emasculated	Masculine
Consumption	Production
Order	Disorder
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Repressed	Active control
Contemporary	Primitive
<b>Setting<sup>1</sup> Conformism</b>	<b>Setting<sup>2</sup> Anarcho Primitivism</b>

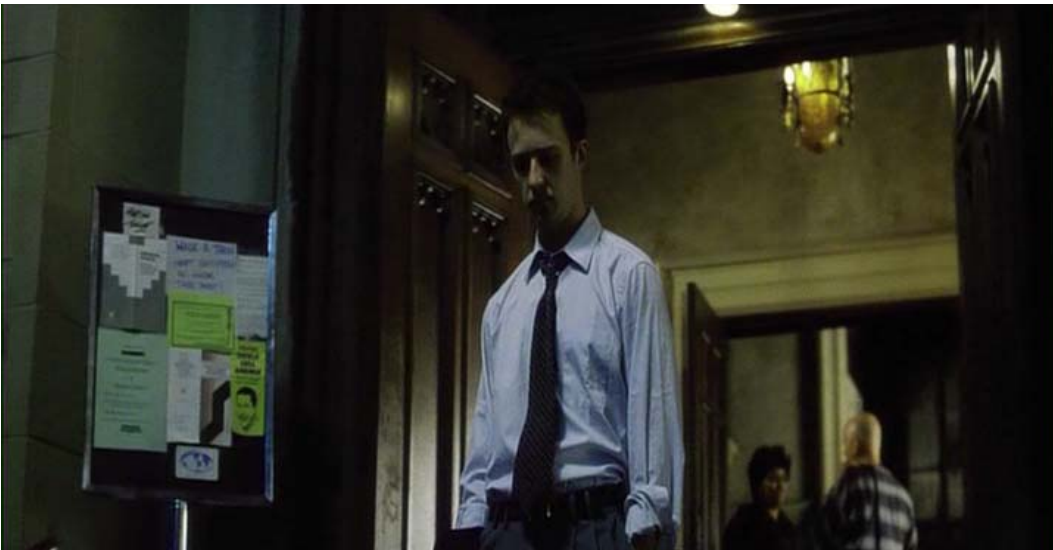
The codes outlined in this Table are derived from the audio track that composes narration, the perspective of the protagonist as he describes the characteristics of both characters in a series of metaphors regarding their domestic inhabitation, occupation and social activities. The next step will analyze how these codes were employed in the visualization of these characters.

Fight Club presents the audience with a significant example of identity transformation, a perverse transformation-revelation narrative that tells the story of a troubled individual who has a provocative resolution to a world nurtured by corporate images and marketing strategies that brainwash public into believing artificial needs and utopic dreams.





**Figure 6.7** Protagonist, *Jack*, struggling to focus at work (Fight Club, 1999)



**Figure 6.8** Protagonist, exiting a support group (Fight Club, 1999)

The protagonist of Fight Club goes through a transformation of his ideological stand in the American conformist lifestyle after he meets Tyler Durden, which surprisingly coincides with the day his condo explodes. As he narrates his story, he is critical of his own lifestyle and speaks of his time with Tyler as a kind of rebirth. His transformation, builds up in the course of the whole narrative, by the end as he hints his audience with the following questions, it is revealed that his transformation also builds up on a psychiatric level as his alter ego surfaces in concrete form taking over his own body:



Jack: *Was I asleep? Had I slept? Is Tyler my bad dream or am I Tyler's?* (Fight Club, 1999)

His desire to change his life is narrated in auditory and visual channels as he narrates: If you wake up at a different time, a different place, could you wake up as a different person?

As this question echoes, the camera follows Jack escalating down and tilts to Tyler Durden escalating up. Up till then Tyler had been shown in a number of blinks, for 1/12 of a second each time. The statement is clear, Jack is reminiscent of a lifestyle that is identical to Tyler's. As the audience tilts up with Tyler, he is in the completion of his creation; soon he, coincidentally, meets Jack on an airplane.



**Figure 6.9** Jack meets Tyler (Fight Club, 1999)

Jack's transformation represented by a dramatic decline in the quality of his lifestyle. More and more Jack adopts Tyler's quality of living as he gradually agrees with his perspective of life and ideology. His lifestyle and daily rituals change, as his hygiene standards and privacy boundaries alter; manifest in his comfort in dwelling in Tyler's decaying mansion and rotting resources.



**Figure 6.10** Tap water in Tyler's house (Fight Club, 1999)



**Figure 6.11** Jack trimming fingernails, as Tyler bathes (Fight Club, 1999)



**Figure 6.12** Jack reading in bed in Tyler's house (Fight Club,1999)



**Figure 6.13** Tyler selling soap to a luxurious department store (Fight Club, 1999)



**Figure 6.14** Tyler's home phone, white paint smeared across (Fight Club, 1999)



**Figure 6.15** Tyler waiting on at a luxurious restaurant wearing large headphones

His disregard to commonsense is embedded in his manners. His lack of attention to commonsensical taste and social conduct quickly invest itself within Jack. He accessorises with cigarettes, he takes disrespects the dress code at work and so on. Once a child of TV generation, a respectful professional, Jack quickly transforms into a nonconformist who rejects the feminization of late capitalism and who suddenly enjoys a ritual of fighting with rules that openly reflect a slightly S&M tone (Ta, 2006). By the time he questions his state of mind, Jack has transformed into a neo-luddite nihilist from a regular conformist.





**Figure 6.16** Jack at work, antagonizing his superior. (Fight Club, 1999)

### 6.3.2 Analysis of Design Elements in Visual Narrative

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. (Fight Club, 1999)

The Linguistic messages of Fight Club are mostly uttered by Tyler at the beginnings and endings of Fighting sessions, either before the members of Fight Club relieve the repressed aggression toward their lives and grasp the ideology of his monologue, or relaxed in the almost post-coital bliss of releasing stress with a bare knuckle fight. He lists the rules of Fight Club, which stress the order within disorder, the necessary precautions that will guard Fight Club's anonymity for as long as it ought to, he gives the building base of disillusion of contemporary society so that the members of Fight club will soon join him in a quest at a larger scale. Project Mayhem is the tool for Tyler to induce chaos as an answer to the problems of consumerist individual.

**Table 6.2** Settings of Analysis

<b>JACK</b>		<b>TYLER</b>	
<b>OUTLOOK</b>		<b>OUTLOOK</b>	
<b>Setting3: Jack's Outfit</b>		<b>Setting3: Tyler's Outfit</b>	
Dark Blue Jacket		Red Leather Jacket	
White Dress Shirt		Alternating Shirts	
Coloring		Coloring	
		Accessories	
<b>DOMESTIC INHABITANCE</b>		<b>DOMESTIC INHABITANCE</b>	
<b>Setting1 : Jack's Condo</b>		<b>Setting1: Paper Street Mansion</b>	
<b>Living Room</b>		<b>Hallway</b>	
Catalog Anchorage		Texture of Decay	
<i>IKEA Sofa: Strinne Green Stripe Pattern</i>		Worn out Furniture	
<b>Bedroom</b>		<b>Bedroom</b>	
Sheets and Bedding		Bedding	
<b>Bathroom</b>		<b>Bathroom</b>	
Tiling		Tiling	
Bathtub		Bathtub	
Hygene Products		Hygene Products	
Telephone		Telephone	
<b>OCCUPATION</b>		<b>OCCUPATION</b>	
<b>Setting 2: Recall Coordination</b>		<b>Setting 2: Soapmaking</b>	
High Profile Office Interior		Home shop Craft	
Filing Cabinet		Kitchen Table	
Copier		Kitchen Items	
Computer		Industrial Bottle	
<b>PASTIME</b>		<b>PASTIME</b>	
<b>Setting: Support Groups</b>		<b>Setting: Fight Club</b>	
Lighting		Lighting	
Organization		Seclusion	
National Flag		<i>Column Padding: Strinne Green Stripe Pattern Upholstery</i>	
Name Tags		Lack of Clothing	

**Outfit:**

There is a sharp contrast in the visual elements that form the image of these two characters. Jack and Tyler are visually in contrast, Tyler emphasizes color in his clothing which is a notion Jack represses. The comparison of their wardrobe constitutes a metaphor of their maintenance of their anger. Jack represses his anger to his surrounding whereas Tyler dwells on his.

**Jack**

**Figure 6.17 Jack**

**Tyler**

**Figure 6.17 Tyler**

**Setting 1: Outfit**

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**Tyler Durden****The linguistic Message**

"We are consumers ... what concerns me is some guys name on my underwear."

(Fight Club, 1999)

As he utters the line above, it becomes clear why Tyler's wardrobe extensively denies brand consumption and an up-to-date fashion sense. In the explicit irony Tyler reveals that he openly rejects the being forced to be a brand-consumer, one of the reasons why his wardrobe is a collection of lost and found, salvaged from what has already been purchased. His statement signifies his rejection of social acceptance that is achieved through a parade of brands that surround one's body.

### Coded Iconic Message



**Figure 6.19** Tyler Durden, Fight Club

Tyler's wardrobe extensively favors red in color: his coats, jackets and accessories are mainly bold shades of red, and he frequently sports a pair of red jeans. Tyler's emphasis of red signifies the emphasis of his anger that he acts out on, both visually and verbally. Tyler's anger towards the emasculation of men, the consumerist entrapment that is composed of unnecessary commodities directs him to find catharsis in fighting. Red also signifies Tyler's notion of existence through the presence of blood, open wound and pain. Tyler declares that he does not want to die without a scar from a fight, an open wound that reminds his fighting signifies Tyler's existence.





**Figure 6. 20** Tyler Durden in Red Leather Jacket

“For clothes, Tyler goes to gyms and hotels and claims clothing out of the lost and found. This is better than Marla, who goes to Laundromats to steal jeans out of the dryers and sell them at twelve dollars a pair to those places that buy used jeans.” (Palahniuk, 1996).



**Figure 6. 21** Tyler Durden

Incoherent, multi-colored pop T-shirts are the next significant features of Tyler’s wardrobe. Incoherence in styles and colors signify Tyler’s way of obtaining a wardrobe,

eclecticism. Tyler's eclecticism signifies his resistance to fashion trends. Multi colored outfits brings Tyler forth in any social scene he exists, signifying his conscious status as the outcast individual.



**Figure 6. 22** Tyler and Jack selling soap

Tyler's mannerisms place him outside the limits of social conventions, those which Tyler considers to be insincere and pretentious. His eclectic outfits bring out his existence in social environments where other individuals choose to ignore his presence. His wardrobe signifies his conscious effort as well as his comfort with his outcast status. The items he wears contain an order which explicitly signifies disorder and displacement. Within the frame above, while Jack is at the foreground, Tyler stands out with his mischievous posture and the slight exposing of his body, and his outfit. As the coloring of his outfit matches the cosmetic nature of the department store, the tie and the glasses bring back the image of Tyler Durden. Particularly at the department store where he carries his business, the conscious outlining of his image as the nonconformist salesman resonates with his conscious preference of being on the production end of consumption schema.

The worn-out pieces of his outfits signify an active individual who is in control of his life and his energy. Tyler, in comparison to Jack is constantly full of dynamic energy which he directs to fighting and exercise as opposed to having his energy directed to an occupational duty as any average social individual.

In an ironic assembly, Tyler extensively accessorizes in keeping with his red favored outfits, and he always sports a unique hair-do. The complete outlook of Tyler is that of a metrosexual man. Simpson identifies the metrosexual man as follows:

Metrosexual man, the single young man with a high disposable income, living or working in the city (because that's where all the best shops are), is perhaps the most promising consumer market of the decade. In the Eighties he was only to be found inside fashion magazines such as GQ, in television advertisements for Levis jeans or in gay bars. In the Nineties, he's everywhere and he's going shopping. ( Simpson, 1994)

Within the ironic visual coherence, Tyler mocks the metrosexual man and his consumption oriented vanity treatment of himself. His tirade regarding the unfulfilled promises *to be movie gods and rock stars by the media* signifies his mockery and his outlook suggests that to emphasize masculine image of a man one may as well turn to salvage.

Tyler's wardrobe then, is literally a multiplicity of different people, which of course is contrasted throughout the film with Jack's striated, stratified existence ( Elliot, 2005) In the textual narrative of the novel, Tyler's wardrobe is an anti-assemblage of self-display which is in itself consistent of the self-conception that declares anti-consumerism. The outlining signifiers in Tyler's Outfit are therefore:

**Linguistic Message:**

"We are consumers; ... what concerns me is some guys name on my underwear."

**Coded Iconic Message**

**Table 6.3.** Coded Iconic Messages of Tyler Durden

<b>Signifier:</b>	<b>Signified:</b>
Dominance of Red in wardrobe	Acceptance of Anger, Blood, Violence
Incoherent, Multi-colored outfit	Eclecticism, Free Spirit, conscience of outcast status
Worn out, casual outfit	Active Control, Energy, Masculinity
Accessories - Sunglasses, necklace	Obliviousness to social reaction, conscience outcast status, irony of metrosexual manhood.

## Setting 1: Outfit

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### Jack

#### Linguistic Message

"I had everything in that suitcase, my Calvin Klein suits, my DKNY shoes ..."

Jack immediately presents himself as the decent hardworking white-collar American male. The audience identifies him through his words and the tone of their delivery as he is the narrator. Jack on the other hand identifies himself through his belongings, his occupation and his psychological problem, insomnia. Within the anecdote of his suitcase being detained at the airport, Jack narrates a clear-cut image of himself. His occupation requires him to be presentable, which is interpreted by him almost naturally as high-class brands and quality designer items. High class wardrobe as such requires a significant amount of money, a detained suitcase full of his work outfit is *everything* to him. Use of the word everything is interestingly denotative in the sense that it represents actual physical items, every *thing* that represents him to his professional environment, tucked in a suitcase. Jack, therefore, identifies himself as the person whose outlook has a great impact on his life, on his social acceptance.

#### Coded Iconic Message

As stated within the previous message Jack's social status relies heavily on his outlook. Therefore his outfits create an icon of himself. As the audience is introduced to Jack, his life is presented within his business trips where he is constantly seen in gray suits, white shirt and tie. The unchanging gray suit and white dress shirt signifies his monotone lifestyle, one that imposed on him. The first sequence where his supervisor is seen, he narrates:

It must have been Tuesday, he was wearing his cornflower blue tie.

The monotone dynamic of his occupation leaves its print on Jack, he constantly seen in a button-down shirt, even when he's attending support groups. Professional outfit becomes Jack's icon, as the progress of his psychological transformation becomes visible on his outlook. Through the metaphor of peeling off layers Jack's psychological transformation is hinted to the audience. After meeting Tyler, Jack is strips off his suit jacket, further into the course of the narrative, his tie disappears. Toward the end Jack is

seen in undershirts. To pursue his goal to demolish Project Mayhem he runs on the streets in his underwear and his overcoat. The more layers he peels off his outlook, his personality features loosen and get closer to that of Tyler's.



**Figure 6. 23** Jack in constant mobility



**Figure 6. 24** Jack at work



**Figure 6. 25** Jack and Marla discussing after support group



**Figure 6. 26** Jack using Tyler's phone





**Figure 6. 27** Jack at work after Fight Club

*"Tyler's words coming out of my mouth, and I used to be such a nice guy."*

Jack's choice of coherent coloring signifies his submissiveness in the face of commonsense. While Tyler is seen experimenting with vintage clothing, Jack is always coherent in his outlook white and light gray dominating his appearance. The dominance of white signifies his avoidance of violence as well as his search of peace.

Jack's another constant item of wardrobe is his dark blue overcoat. The emphasis of basic dark and white, coherent coloring in his outfits signifies his resolution to his aggravation as repression. Jack is seen as the submissive individual while his outfit almost never changes. While his aggression towards conformism strips him off his designer suits purchased for their ability to form a presentable image and his final realization strips him off all clothing but the absolute necessity, dark blue overcoat is constant. From the perspective of human body metaphor, dark blue can be interpreted as the color of a swollen tissue right before its burst, while Tyler's outlook presents his existence in the presence of blood, Jack overcoat may suggest repressed to the point of outburst; consequently with Tyler coming to life as the sole founder of Project Mayhem the outburst is at completion. From an indexical perspective, Jack's dark blue and white attire and Tyler's outlook with the dominant color red completes the colors of American National Flag. Within the same context these two individuals present the two ends of

American society, the salvaging nonconformist and the white-collar consumer. Tyler and Jack complete the two ends of American Society, implicit in the visual elements as the film progresses, and explicit in the unfolding of their existence as one: the protagonist.

**Linguistic Message:**

“I had all my designer suits in that suitcases, I had a wardrobe that was close to being complete”

(Fight Club,1999)

**Coded Iconic Message:**

**Table 6.4.** Coded Iconic Messages of Tyler Durden

<b>Signifier:</b>	<b>Signified:</b>
Coloring: Gray, White	Monotone Lifestyle ( Linguistic message: he's wearing his blue tie on Tuesday) , White Collar Working Man
Coherent Suited outfit	Submissiveness, Boredom,
Dark Blue Jacket	Color of Swollen Body tissue, Repressed Individual

**Setting 2 : Domestic Inhabitation**

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**Tyler's Mansion**

**Linguistic Message:**

“If I could wake up in a different place, at a different time, could I wake up as a different person?”

Tyler's mansion on Paper Street is an abandoned establishment in an abandoned neighborhood. In contrast to Jack's apartment, Tyler's house is massive, extensively dirty and unpreserved, to the point of collapsing. In addition to their outlooks, their living environments draw a clearer image of comparison on how far apart on any given scale these individuals are. Jack's question above is uttered twice in the film. His questioning leads him to form a separate individual, an imaginary friend who is the complete opposite of himself and begin to produce a living environment for this individual.



### **Coded Iconic Message**

Tyler Durden's domestic inhabitation, next to his appearance is the definite opposite of the protagonist in its nonconformist, nihilist composition, its location, its explicit ideological stand and its appearance.

The abandoned Mansion in an abandoned neighborhood signifies Tyler's place in the contemporary society. As an individual Tyler refuses most commonsense and moral conventions, in a conformist society such as contemporary America as in the film, Tyler is an outcast. The place where he can exist in the particular society is an abandoned neighborhood, an abandoned mansion. As an individual who refuses to a part of a conformist society, the location is one that is to Tyler's contentment.

At Tyler's house, there hangs a worn-out American flag, tied together in a glorifying manner, even though its color has faded and its original rectangle shape has deformed. This flag signifies his unconditional existence as the marginal individual that is undeniably a part of this society, the distance between Tyler and the true American society which had once the appropriate priorities and social conventions, his displacement. The fact that Tyler has chosen to hold on to it resonates his belief that there is a resolution to the current corruption in society.

The trademark of this mansion is its dilapidation, conspicuous texture of the degraded paint on all the walls and wooden frames constructing the house. The household items that meet the basic needs of inhabitation are obsolete, worn out at their utmost fatigue and minimal in quantity. Dilapidation and decay resonates with Tyler's view of consumerist hegemony. His opinion is that the contemporary mannerism of lifestyle obsession is in its core a corrupt way of life, distancing human beings from their true goal and joy in life and providing them counterfeit satisfactions which, when stripped off their appealing surfaces reveal corrupt, broken and unpleasant raw material. Therefore, the massive Victorian style mansion, which in its era would have been remarkable, is in the process of collapsing. The paint on the walls are peeling off and revealing rotting humid cement, nails are resurfacing conveniently providing accidents as *snagging one's elbow on*, the wooden structure is weak and unstable, all of which signify degeneration, that of society, that of priorities and that of survival instincts. Considering the fact that Tyler is one and the same as Jack, it becomes clear that Jack is the one that has found

this establishment, therefore the structure stripped off its refinement also signifies the disillusioning perspective of the protagonist himself.

Tyler's characteristic and ideological traits show that he is against all forms of consumption; therefore the elements of his household is devoid of artifacts that are in any way new; compositions are achieved through the assemblage of production design. The construction of the house is achieved through artificial texture on the elements of architecture and the household objects. The second side of the main duality in the narrative is revealed to be nihilist anti-consumerism Tyler Durden's perspective, and there's a noteworthy aspect to the construction of his inhabitation: there are no product placements, no contemporary mass-produced objects of any kind. The totality of this house's design is the fruit of production design department, custom designed for the character.

The one present-day artifact is Strinne Green Stripe patterned cushions that were initially seen in Jack's apartment. However, the sofa is reused in its deconstructed form in this context, as parts of the product are viewed to be utilized for their primal function, as padding against hard flat surfaces for the human body parts. The first evidence of this shift is seen when the protagonist is in his *new* bed, on which there's no bedding, covers or sheets only one of the cushion of the specific sofa for a pillow. It is visibly worn out and dirty, contrary to the condition in Jack's Condo. The coloring of the cushion has subsided due to dust and humidity just as every other aspect to the house. The coloring of dust and humidity echoes Tyler's refusal of emasculated perfection that is domestic harmony.

**Table 6.5.** Coded Iconic Messages of Tyler's Mansion

<b>Signifier:</b>	<b>Signified:</b>
Abandoned, Alone, Large Mansion	Tyler's place in contemporary Society, to his contentment, refusal of social conventions ( neighborhood, basic modern needs, TV)
Coloring of Dust and Stain	Obliviousness to Perfection, Refusal of Feminine Domesticity.
Worn out, peeled off Paint, rusted nails	Tyler's ideology on consumerism, Fate of material wealth, Jack's enlightenment

## **Setting 2 : Domestic Inhabitation**

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### **Jack's Condo Apartment**

#### **Linguistic Message:**

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you (Palahnuik,1999).

Jack is a white collar average as he introduces himself to the audience. His life consists of his job and his constant mobility as a result of his job, his condo and his struggle to sleep. All of these traits of his life together with his gradual detachment from it, causes him an asocial existence. Seen in his domestic environment, Jack is surrounded by artifacts. However these artifacts are slowly trapping him inside the very notion he finds himself detached from: material lifestyle. After his condo had exploded, he reveals to Tyler that a part of him is devastated that all of his belongings which he has been working to sum up to a decent and presentable exterior. Tyler declares that they are just items of a lifestyle obsession and the things that have vanished are only things, his livelihood is safe and sound. With the course of the dialogue, as stated above, Jack is confronted with the reality that what he has building towards has achieved one purpose

and one purpose only, an identity as a consumer. Things he owned ended up owning him, signifying the notion that consumerism has trapped him.

**Coded Iconic Message:**

Jack introduces his condo to the audience through a catalogue page. Fincher states that the IKEA catalog scene had derived from the idea of explicitly revealing the protagonist's habit of involving in brand consumption. Therefore the interior is designed through one of the combinations of IKEA customer profile stereotypes, all the household items are shown as a catalog page, the anchorage reveals their names, their prices complete with brief advertorial descriptions and storage codes, the spectator is given the opportunity to shop at IKEA for the exact items if inclined.



**Figure 6.28** IKEA CATALOG page Jack's condo

The main elements of this composition are striking in their material identity. The whole interior design is composed of IKEA products, explicitly indicated by the beginning frame the continuous tracking shot and furthered by the anchorage. The beginning is an empty space with the basic architectural elements in place. As the space starts to be furnished by one item after the other, with their catalogue information, the audience is becomes aware of every item in Jack's condo, their material identity, their cost and the overall style that will illuminate this condo.



**Figure 6.29** IKEA CATALOG page

The first item to be inserted is a mobile desk which organizes a home office in a space that affords only this particular item indicating that Jack prefers a professional environment in his home, which resembles the workspace he has in his office. An exercise bike facing the window is in the next partially enclosed space. The bookshelves, storage units and dinner table match the surface finish of the workstation. The catalogue details of these items emphasize instant customization and mobility. Armchairs and Strinne Green Stripe patterned sofa emphasize a casual interior, while the Yin-Yang coffee table offers a hint of humor. Soon the space gets crowded with over-emphasized multiple lighting units and multiple framed artwork. Starting with a casual interior design with a consistent light pastel color palette; the condo ends up crowded with 30 dollar decorative items. Numerous storage items store below their capacity, signifying that the outlook and identity reinforcing quality of these items surpass their function.



**Figure 6.30** IKEA CATALOG anchorage Jack's condo



**Figure 6.31** Jack's Condo Catalog Anchorage

The catalogued items sum up to 3750 US dollars electronic excluded. Price of the items exhibits the extent of income spent for the sake of completing this particular interior

design, whereas the material and aesthetic quality of the furniture and kitchen artifacts reveals the attempt to display a personal taste in artistic appreciation. ( fig 6.30)

As the nature of this spatial composition indicates conformist consumerism, elements in this composition are solely achieved through product placement. Narration indicates that every piece of furniture and domestic artifacts are exclusively branded IKEA. The nature of the first side of the protagonist's main conflict is therefore stamped as material consumerism, which later in the film is uttered by the other side of this conflict.

The specific nature of IKEA as a consumer choice is worthy of noting: A fully constructed artifact displayed in the catalog as well as the store is delivered in deconstructed parts for the owner to put together. This particular aspect of IKEA style consumption turns out to be valuable to the course of the narrative.

There are two distinct design elements in this composition which are revisited further in the film: The Tjeneste sofa with the strinne green stripe pattern and the Frukthar coffee table in the shape of Yin-Yang. The narration by the protagonist as he passes through his condo reveals the extent of his consumption habit, exemplified by naming these two items specifically.

"If I saw a clever item, like the coffee table in the shape of a Yin-Yang, I had to have it."



**Figure 6.32** Condo Explosion – Yin Yang Coffee Table



The humorous nature of the coffeetable later binds the introduction of Jack as the domestic consumer and the disorder that will unfold with the explosion. These two items play a central role in the design of the protagonist's shift in his state of mind. As he witnesses the result of the explosion, Jack passes by the coffeetable covered in fume and dust, tilted towards him due to broken extremities. The point of twist is emphasized by the coffee table's demolition, the humorous artifact marking the beginning of the unfolding of Jack's state of mind.

### **Bathrooms:**

The views of the bathroom's in Jack's condo and Tyler's mansion are mirroring in framing, all visual elements are parallel. On the far end tiling pattern is visible, Jack's bathroom sports a set of white, square tiling that is neatly lined up, with white plaster. Tyler's tiling is visible shade of dusty white, tiling is parallel every two lines, and the plaster is visibly dirty. Attached to the back tile wall is the bathtub. Jack's bathtub is a ceramic tub in matching white; next to the tub is a closed white cabinet and hygiene products are not in sight. Tyler's Bathtub sports a dirty wooden frame, next to the on left end is a black cabinet that is in contrast with the coloring of the bathroom. The cabinet shows an opened drawer. Hygiene products are lined up on the edge of the tub.



**Figure 6.33** Jack's Bathroom



**Figure 6.34** Tyler's Bathroom

Jack's organized, clean stark white bathroom contradicts Tyler's humid, worn-out rusty and untidy bathroom. The characteristics of these personalities are in clear comparison: while Jack emphasizes a feminized order, harmony and cleanliness, Tyler emphasizes disorder, characteristic icon of decay and dirt of the mansion is present. While Jack's bathtub is a modern fine finished ceramic complete with accessories to store hygiene



products, Tyler is seen in a retro, geometrical wooden framed tub; the signification of modern vs. primitive is visible.

Modern vs. primitive is a recurring comparison when the two characters are seen using their home telephones. As several of his belongings, Jack's pitch black cordless phone emphasizes mobility, contradicting Tyler's paint smeared, nostalgic phone which is fixed vertical on a wall in a manner that resembles a public phone.



**Figure 6.35** Jack's telephone



**Figure 6.36** Tyler's telephone

While Jack's limited space contains many items that provide mobility, Tyler's massive space features fixed items. Jack's limited environment with a mobile items provide him the illusion of freedom of movement. However the freedom of movement is transfixed into the small horizontal space of the condo which is several floors high. In comparison Tyler's mansion sports a small amount of artifacts emphasizing space. The freedom of movement ceases to be an illusion, reinforced with the fact that it has a backyard and it's front doors open right onto the ground.

The notion of space signifies the characters' stand against consumerist conformism. While Jack struggles with the fact that his life is filled with the disillusion, his livelihood and his personally designed environment traps him within itself, Jack resorts to the illusion of mobility as a resort, however is unable to embrace the true mobility that is provided by his occupation: frequent traveling.

## Domestic Inhabitation: Jack

### Linguistic Message:

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. (Fight Club, 1999)

### Coded Iconic Message

**Table 6.6** Coded Messages of Domestic Inhabitation of Jack

Signifier:	Signified:
Condo Apartment	Limited space, entrapment within the IKEA Catalogue
Coherent Coloring	Harmony, Illusion of Peace
Clean, Organized Decor	Perfect Feminine, Domesticity
IKEA Nesting Instinct	Delusion of Completion through consumption

### Anchorage:

Every piece of Furniture is named, priced and tagged, Jack is living a life out of a perfect image from a megacorporate catalogue. Even if the viewer does not immediately recognize the catalogue page to be signifying the IKEA marketing trend, the unique naming of each item, the subtle linguistic twist on the words very unfamiliar to English triggers the knowledge. The consistence naming is complete with a consistent font and pricing style the confusion is eliminated: Jack furnishes through a catalogue, he does not even leave his condo. The latter is hinted by Jack completing his track in his condo with his phone on his hand holding for an order to be placed. The prices of each item hold information on how much have been spent on the interior design.

### Setting 3: Occupation

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#### Tyler: Soap Production

#### Linguistic Message:

"It was Beautiful, we were selling these rich women their fat asses back."

(Fight Club, 1999)

Tyler uses a very intricate almost academic know-how which is trivial to the consumer society, to recycle the undesired results of consumption. He enters the cycle of consumerism on his own preference; as a producer of a prestigious homemade artifact as opposed to the unconscious and unsuspecting consumerist.

#### Coded Iconic Message

As Tyler introduces himself, the audience learns that he produces his own line of soap. As he teaches Jack how to make soap, the audience takes a step by step journey through Tyler's soap production. The crucial ingredient of Tyler's soap is human fat, retrieved from liposuction clinic waste bins.



**Figure 6.37** Human Fat from Liposuction Clinic

Liposuction clinic waste, human fat immediately connotes the wealthy female in search of a better body figure which will be achieved through getting rid of the unwanted fat. Tyler recycles the unwanted body fat and produces beauty soap. The body fat that has been rid of the female body through cosmetic surgery in the search of beauty is therefore reinserted back into the cosmetic industry. The color of the body fat retrieved and the color of the soap produced are identical, signifying the recycle process.



**Figure 6.38** Soap production

Tyler produces his soap in the kitchen of his mansion in a manner of workshop. The soap is a product of Batch production as opposed to a product of mass production, furthering the comparison of the two characters. While Tyler prefers to be involved in batch production in complete supervision, Jack Works for a mass produced automobile brand, under someone else's supervision.



**Figure 6.39** Kitchen full of chemicals

The step by step soap production Tyler illustrates presents the audience the totality of instruments he employs in the process. Old kitchen pots, wooden ladles, filtered chemicals retrieved by boiling and filtering ingredients signify the primitive mode of production. As Tyler is the only worker of this homeshop, he is in full control of his livelihood, as opposed to Jack who is under constant supervision.

### **Linguistic Message**

“It was Beautiful, we were selling these rich women their fat asses back.”

### **Coded Iconic Message**

**Table 6.7** Coded Iconic Messages of Tyler’s Occupation

Sign:	Signified:
Crucial ingredient: Human fat	Unwanted results of consumption recycled.
Kitchen	Batch production.
Old stained culinary items	Active and primitive mode of production

### Setting 3: Occupation

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#### Jack: Recall Coordination

##### Linguistic Message

“Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy things we don't need”

Jack works at a job where he determines if the flawed product of his company can still be on the market instead of being recalled upon a calculation of expenses. His occupation, requires him to constantly mobilize himself and his life, he finds himself concealing the illusion of safety within the products and his psychological condition worsens on the idea.

##### Coded Iconic Message

Jack works in a major automobile company as a recall coordinator. His workspace is a personal cubicle. Once again the audience is given the sense of entrapment that Jack finds himself in, with only person coming through his door opening being his supervisor. Jack is able to tell the day of the week by his supervisor's tie color.



**Figure 6.40** Jack's supervisor with the cornflower blue tie, Tuesday



Another aspect of his occupation is constant mobility; as a recall coordinator he is ordered to travel across America to evaluate the production failure in accidents of his company's automobiles to determine if a recall is necessary. The comparison with a court settlement and the cost of a recall signifies the capitalist approach of automobile manufacturer.



**Figure 6.41** Jack's office

His job signifies mass production, technological aspect of his occupation signified with his computer and necessary equipment, in contradiction to Tyler's soap production. His office coloring is white, his desktop seemingly tidy, and folders are neatly lined up. He wears a light gray suits and white shirts for work, signifying his white collar office worker status. Even though his home is furnished by means of a 4 digit budget, his occupation renders Jack passive, controlled. The illusion of being a white collar individual is provided and reinforced with the coloring of his office environment.

**Linguistic Message:**

"Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy things we don't need"

## Coded Iconic Message

**Table 6.8** Coded Iconic Messages of Jack's Occupation

Sign:	Signified:
Cubicle	Enclosed space, traps Jack within his workspace, under the orders of his supervisor.
Constant Flights	Lack of Social life. <i>Single serving life.</i>
Office supplies and technological tools	Contemporary mode of occupation, passive Office work, monotone mediums to function. (Everything's a copy of a copy of a copy.)
Ambient Colors: Light Gray and White	White collar Illusion of a passive worker

## Setting 4: Recreation

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### Jack: Support Groups

#### Linguistic Message

“When people think you're dying they really, really listen to you instead of just waiting for their turn to speak.”

Jack's occupation and his condo traps him within his seemingly perfect life; nonetheless constant mobility, and the disillusion of contemporary ideology that surrounds his being causes him to withdraw from his environment. As he attends support groups, he takes a chance to recreate himself, as a person who is dying, suffering from a serious fatal disease, completes the image with a made-up name and impersonates the identity as he cries over his genuine suffering; being detached from his pseudo existence. When he says nothing people assume the worst and let him cry. The support groups are all fatal diseases, where people confess the lowest point of their lives, these environments are



where Jack can find people who are stripped off their roles within contemporary culture, consumerist instincts and pretentious courtesies and listen to one another at a truly intimate level.

### **Coded Iconic Message**

Jack's insomnia consequently resolves after taking up support groups to seek catharsis. As his sleep cycle develops, Jack becomes addicted; his favorite pastime becomes his time spent at support groups. Through meditation and genuine human contact he finds peace and resolution to his disorder. The support groups require name tags on members, provide coffee and snacks, and members take turns in talking. Name tags signify civil introduction of identity, Jack is seen to put different names for each support group. While name tags signify civil exchange of identity, Jack's multiple names signify his need to assume a different identity than his. As a support group tourist, he strips off his own identity and feels the freedom to become another, one with a physical disorder, one that people take time to listen to. While support groups provide order, commonsense and civil behavior, Jack achieves them through manipulation of his own identity.



**Figure 6.42** Nametags

**Figure 6.43** Flag in Background

Support groups gather in community spaces, in programmed schedules that are hung as flyers signifying the explicit notion of social support, a contemporary shared experience sought out as a catharsis to a fatal destiny. The members are eager to meet and share experiences to relieve stress from both themselves and fellow sufferers. In contradiction Fight Club is ruled to be secretive. The gatherings are mixed in terms gender, as opposed to an all male Fight club. The mixed gender nature of these groups in turn signifies an emasculated experience.

Quite often support group interiors sport an American Flag in the background signifying one of the hidden sides of American society. While the American dream goes on outside as the form of metropolitan lifestyle, the terminally ill gathers indoors, in a form of confinement to share experiences, the unflattering notion of death and disease is therefore concealed.

### **Linguistic Message:**

“When people think you’re dying they really, really listen to you instead of just waiting for their turn to speak.”

### **Coded Iconic Message**

**Table 6.9** Coded Iconic Messages of Jack’s Occupation

Signifier:	Signified:
Name tags, snacks	Civil act of identity exchange
Community Spaces	Contemporary, Explicit, civilized, shared experience
Mix gendered groups, organized spaces	Civil, Order, Adaptivity, Emasculation.

### **Recreation**

#### **Tyler: Fight Club**

### **Linguistic Message:**

"You aren't alive anywhere like you're alive at fight club.... Fight club isn't about winning or losing fights. Fight club isn't about words. You see a guy come to fight club for the first time, and his ass is a loaf of white bread. You see this same guy here six months later, and he looks carved out of wood. This guy trusts himself to handle anything. There's grunting and noise at fight club like at the gym, but fight club isn't about looking good."

(Fight Club,1999)

Tyler's Fight Club idea derived from one single fact, that as men they have been living in a bubble of illusion where the product of the first manly instinct had almost been lost to them: Scars. Having never fought, Tyler announces that he would not like to die without a scar, which would indicate that he had not lived up to the survival instinct of the very first identity he gained at his birth, being a man. Tyler's embrace of his anger surfaces through his eagerness to fight and repress the urge to prevent it. He believes a fight to be refreshing and enlightening for a man, an offer to regain his identity from the emasculating features that surround their culture.

The Linguistic messages of Fight Club are mostly uttered by Tyler at the beginnings and endings of Fighting sessions, either before the members of Fight Club relieve the repressed aggression toward their lives and grasp the ideology of his monologue, or relaxed in the near post-coital bliss of releasing stress with a bare knuckle fight. He lists the rules of Fight Club, which stress the order within disorder, the necessary precautions that will guard Fight Club's anonymity for as long as it ought to, he gives the building base of disillusion of contemporary society so that the members of Fight club will soon join him in a quest at a larger scale: Project Mayhem.

### **Code Iconic Message**

The fight clubs, Tyler's sense of pastime, where the true notion of American men can be uttered via physical challenge, are very weakly lit and concealed in dark basements. The space provides these men to act on their aggression toward their emasculated entrapment, signifying their secretly rebellious instincts. Fighting requires stripping shirts and shoes, while avoiding undesired stains, the act of stripping off their outfits signify the need to return to primitive masculinity. Through fighting these men revel in their primitive instincts to peel off the feminized lifestyles they are living in.

The columns of the basements are padded with green-stripe patterned Cushions, which the protagonist had emphasized in enunciation within his IKEA nesting instinct. The sofa

with strinne green stripe pattern shifts in between the two sides of the main duality at this junction. The product which existed as a sofa in Jack's condo, has ben deconstructed and returned to its primitive function as a buffer to hard surfaces to protect human body, stripped from the product form and only upholstery is used.



**Figure 6.44** Fight Club

Fight Club, provides American men the opportunity to express their aggression towards media promoting celebrity status, towards fathers who have deserted them, feminized lifestyle obsessed in consumption. To the contrary of Jack's support groups, men in Fight Club need as little artifacts as possible, there is no need for furniture, food, nametags, even clothing is reduced, leaving all men equal in their encounter. There no names, no background information. Upon founding Fight Club Jack strips off the need for nametags.

### **Linguistic Message**

"You aren't alive anywhere like you're alive at fight club.... Fight club isn't about winning or losing fights. Fight club isn't about words. You see a guy come to fight club for the first time, and his ass is a loaf of white bread. You see this same guy here six months later, and he looks carved out of wood. This guy trusts himself to handle anything. There's grunting and noise at fight club like at the gym, but fight club isn't about looking good."

### Coded Iconic Message

**Table 6.10** Coded Iconic Messages of Tyler's Recreation

Signifier:	Signified:
Men in groups, dark concealed basements	Rebellion, Chaos, Aggression, Secrecy
Lack of Clothing in activity	Masculine, Primitive, Instinctive
Strinne Green padding	Revisited primitive function, caution.

### Noncoded Iconic Message

#### *Brad Pitt: Outcast Individual*

Brad Pitt himself announces that most men of contemporary America grow up to believe they can be famous movie star or Rock gods but they will not be and the closer they get to that fact the more angrier they will be. The one big contrast of Brad Pitt, a male movie icon uttering these words generate the main irony of Fight Club's chosen media: If there's such a message why should Brad Pitt deliver it? However the film's reality effect surpasses the irony as long as the image of Tyler Durden manages to surpass the image of Brad Pitt. Thereupon the film uses Brad Pitt as an icon, fading behind Tyler's image who more than welcomes the owner of the building that Fight Club proceed within to beat him to the point of hospitalization.

### 6.4 Findings:

Fight Club exclusively emphasizes anti-consumerism and chaos. The post-modern protagonist is in a constant abyss of dissatisfaction and disappointment over his life wrapped in consumption. His insomnia consuming his conscience the audience is unknowingly witnesses his repressed ideology that rejects the orb of capital which promises contentment. Through his rejection he expresses his vehemence towards his

father. In realization he invests in chaos, acting out on his anger and reverse his life's experience of commonsense. As he unconsciously gives in his alter ego develops. Therefore, even though the audience views two completely different characters, they are the one and same person, suffering a mental conflict, an inner dilemma that leads to schizophrenia. Pisters, observes the two sides of this dilemma in terms of Deleuze's theory of the Rhizome: Jack's territorialized by consumerism, in the first stage of this narrative, only it is not the order of life he desires to his subconsciousness. His state of affairs seem insincere and artificial. His resolution is to deterritorialize himself. His alter ego develops as a genuine personality into his life, letting it take over.

Looking at the kind of territorializing (consumption culture) and deterritorializations (the fight clubs, Tyler's rebellious actions) in *Fight Club*, we also have to add that deterritorializing forces are at play as well. By the end of the film, the fight clubs have turned into a sort of terrorist organization, Project Mayhem." (Pisters, 2003)

*Fight Club*'s visualization identifies the sharp line between Tyler and Jack in this aspect, territorialized state of his life is emasculated, consumer-oriented, carrier-driven and mobile. Deterritorialized state of Tyler's life in turn is free of all consumption-oriented needs, feminized conventions and restrictions of commonsense.

All aspects of Tyler's visualization are strictly contradicting Jack's traits, a striking parallel to the Yin Yang table, Jack and Tyler represent two stereotypes American male population. Jack's territorialization of consumer culture is emphasized by bold product placements such as Starbucks, IKEA and Pepsi. Brands stand out as another set of visual elements that form a syntagm that emphasizes capitalist consumerism. IKEA placement is bold in the sense that they are in complete contrast to the intention of positive connotation which is intended to increase sales, the product placement in *Fight Club* is existent in brutal negation of consumerist culture.

Jack's deterritorialization is emphasized by production design's own assembly in set dressing, emphasized by empty interiors, texture of decay, and color palette in *Fight Club* as well as Tyler's mansion. Transformed into these characteristic textures of decay and fatigue, two important paradigmatic elements shift in their syntagms in between the main conflict and produce a change in their signifying content, connote to the main plot twist: the explosion scene is produced with an emphasized texture of fatigue in the kitchen appliances, the coffee table with a ying yang pattern that is exclusively enunciated in the IKEA sequence lays broken on the street in dust; the act itself is revealed later on

into the film to be a self-inflicted arson by Tyler onto Jack. Another paradigmatic element is the Strinne Green Stripe Pattern, it is visible in the IKEA Catalog scene complete with its anchorage that reveals the price and product code. Jack is seen fighting to sleep in his condo; as he shifts more and more into being Tyler the upholstery of the sofa is seen in fight clubs in the characteristic texture and decay of the deterritorialized side of the duality. The deconstructed Sofa also is visible with another part, cushions of the sofa are used as pillows by Jack/ Tyler.

## 7. CONCLUSION

As a visual medium, cinema relies on consistent continuous visual image to properly address its audience. Production design is the creative power behind the complex body of the cinematic image, providing the director and the actors the necessary setting to compose the storyline in. Although architectural design and set design stand out as the substructure of the image, subsiding the role of the object as a descriptive agent; object has a distinct role in terms of the basic necessities of storytelling: narrative, motif and diegetic content.

Hollywood industry, the focal point of this study, has been functioning as a capital industrial mechanism since the emergence of cinema in the US, and therefore has been a critical commercial instrument to reach the mass audience. Thus, the notion of product placement emerges immediately at the juxtaposition of the concepts product and cinema.

However through the process of production design, the fictional society, surroundings and each individual character created by the storyline need to be designed on a solid structure of sociocultural background and in consistency with reality. Consequently the interactions between social individual and object that occur on a daily basis need to be included in the notion that is underlined by the film.

As object and everyday life correlations are addressed in the visualization of the film narrative, object ceases to be a mere tool of commercial activity and become an active agent of storytelling.

The causal connections that compose the audience perception are reinforced as objects proceed on a developing basis rather than a repetitive state. Objects hence function in the story as evidence of character and event progression.

The central contrast as one of the most critical aspects of film narrative; such as good-evil, corrupt-ethical, order-disorder, innocent-guilty etc, is visualized through color, form, texture, lighting and material diversity. Considering the fact that design of a product is dependent on these particular criteria, the progress of development-alteration of object throughout the film within these criteria will further the film meaning and support the metaphors of the narrative in visual form.



The analysis of *Fight Club* shows that reflecting predetermined character developments and alterations on the objects results in augmentation of character visualization through visual metaphors. The progresses of the character and setting are visualized through design decisions that reflect the central contrast of the film. Comparison and causal connections form significantly thereon. The distinction between material-oriented dwelling and chaotic resolution to materialism is emphasized in object oriented visualization in addition to texture design, material and color coding, setting the pathway for the character-based plot-twist the unfolds at the end of the film.

The contribution of object and design to film meaning surface as the acting performance interacts with the setting through objects. Setting and object interaction visually underline the determined notions of the script. Visualization occurs as narrative elements are inserted in order or clustered in intentional irregularity along the causal connection path, regardless of the genre of the narrative. Coding of necessary information is designed as sociocultural and genre specific myths that have conventionalized over time. As codes unfold over the screen, the story will assemble necessary information regarding the setting and characters; upon revealing them the story will unfold its course and illustrate the codes that compose itself. Consequently design reveals its own process while film illustrates the necessity of involving design within the grand process. For instance, computer generated special effects, the indispensable element of contemporary Hollywood, illustrate the myth of technology therefore revealing its own process. The aid if DVD features and other visual media that promote the behind-the-scenes feature of a given Hollywood film have worked as a historical development record of computer aided special effects. The film reveals its need to employ special effects; while deciphering the technology behind the comprehensible image of the film will unfold the myth of special effects during the process of marketing of the film.

The coding of the film is directly related to the sociocultural background of the recipient and the creator, in light of the need to communicate a sociocultural notion in the framework of order/enigma/resolution Visual elaboration is emphasized through objects due to addressing a society that knows itself through artifacts. This thesis has investigated the product of modern age within a semiotic framework to explore their function as a nonverbal communication agent. The objects carry within them coded messages that are communicated to the consumers. Through these products a social process emerges and consumers communicate others through their belongings, objects and products that signify a desired element.

Hollywood stresses this notion for the sake of optimizing the fusion of reality effect and fiction effect for the audience to identify with, resulting in producing coded visualizations and metaphors on both ends. Effectively composed, these codes aid the object in demonstrating its utility as well as the designed identity in addition to construct necessary causal connections for the audience to identify with the characters on screen. The object, then utilizes the narrative of the film as its own, employing the characters as user and completing its own usage scenario. The object will benefit from the film narrative as its own, creating the groundwork for its own promotion.

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