

*CLOUD ATLAS* was an ongoing creation, like a giant abstract sculpture. The guide lines were there, but at every point it seemed possible to add a little bit more creativity, whether it be unique or connected, culminating in a beautiful mosaic of colors and ideas.

--Set Decorators Peter Walpole SDSA & Rebecca Alleway SDSA

## CLOUD ATLAS sets

The film spans five centuries, from the past through the future. The time segments & stories were so detailed and varied that they were split between Set Decorator Rebecca Alleway SDSA and Set Decorator Peter Walpole SDSA. Below, the set decorators give us specifics about key sets for each of their segments....

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## 19<sup>th</sup> century: South Pacific/San Francisco 1849

Set Decorator Peter Walpole SDSA, Production Designer Hugh Bateup

*Opening shot of beach dig – Dr. Henry Goose & young lawyer Adam Ewing...*



...This was the first day of shooting for the Wachowski team, on the Spanish island of Mallorca...A great start due to the spectacular scenery and weather, a simple start for set dec as we prepared greenery to hide modern structures and simple rock pools to reflect the clouds.

*Plantation...*



...The interiors of *Rev. Horrox's* [Hugh Grant] tropical plantation house were built at Babelsberg Studios, Berlin. The reference came from early settlers to New Zealand and surrounding Pacific islands...missionaries and traders, whose buildings were built using local materials then furnished with items bought from the homeland of that particular family. Thus, the bleached interiors with the heavy dark Victoriana furnishings...quite stark, not too fussy. The frieze around the top of the walls has a Maori influence which shows up again in the slums of *Somni 451*.

...The plantation was at the opposite end of the island to where the ship was moored and where the unit base was – a small island but a long drive, due to the network of twisty roads. Coffee is not grown on the island, and time and conditions did not allow me to grow our own. So an excellent artificial substitute was found, but as each plant only came with a small spike, how do we get it to stay in the ground? Artificial greenery is not really supposed to be planted over a few acres of land!!! Potatoes were the answer, from a local farmer. Each plant was spiked on a potato and “planted”...the weight kept them in the ground and afterwards we gave them back to the farmer for his animals.

...The whipping post and other carved poles were taken from reference of Maori art, but an original design by ourselves, made to look imposing and frightening. This was actually real wood carved by a great guy in Berlin.

*Sailing ship returning through the Pacific to San Francisco 1840:*



The exterior of the ship was the ‘Earl of Pembroke’ which came from Charlestown, Cornwall in England. Modern fixtures and fittings were removed and the ship was appropriately dressed to represent that period. All above deck shots were done at sea, including the stunts. We built a small section of the mast in Berlin against green screen for close ups of *Autua* [David Gyasi] releasing the sails. I found a ships-rigger who copied the original mast and rigging. Construction built the mast and we dressed it like any other set.



*Adam Ewing's* [Jim Sturgess] storage-room cabin where, quarantined, he writes his journal: This was a set we built and then re-dressed a few times, without losing its original character. It travelled with us to Saxony, southern Germany for weather cover, and then back to Berlin! It was a very small set, but would have a lot of coverage, so I chose the dressing very carefully, knowing that everything would be seen in detail. Some items were original and some manufactured to look original...no modern screws or nails! Once we established the storage room aspect, I dressed a layer of *Ewing's* personal possessions over the top, being very careful with linen and bedding to ensure they didn't have modern machine stitching. The most problematical thing was to re-create soft pieces of dressing for the fight, for stunts. This was done in our model shop. Again, being a small set, the detail and finishes in the rubber dressing had to be as good as the real thing

...*Captain Molyneaux's* [Jim Broadbent] dining area:

Like the cabin, this was a set build on a gimble. Small, but detail was given to everything...the caulking between the wooden boards...the door handles and lighting, and how they were fixed...square headed nails that we had made by a local blacksmith. The table came from the UK, a beautiful oak table found in an antique supplier in London.

*San Francisco...*

*Ewing's home*



The parlor where he greets wife *Tilda* upon return:

I enjoyed all the sets we designed and dressed, but this was one of my favorites...the simple ornate lines, the colors, the dark furniture against the off-white woodwork and the pale blue wall paper. The Watchowskis were very clear on how they wanted to shoot this, a three sided set that they could track across, taking in the whole set from where the ladies were sitting to the entrance of *Adam Ewing*. This was one of those sets that just worked, encapsulating the period but also including a nautical feel.

*Haskell Moore's home*



*Ewing's* father-in-law's [Hugo Weaving] dining room and study:

A wonderful set to dress, the shape of the set echoing *Ayrs'* manor house, with similar color tones. I tried to capture the feeling of elegance, yet austere to reflect his rigid views.

To the left of the fire place is an oil painting of *Sloosha's Hallow*.

## Cloud Atlas Sextet symphony/letters: Scotland/Cambridge 1936

Set Decorator Rebecca Alleway SDSA, Production Designer Uli Hanisch

*Ayrs' manor house, Scotland:*



A large set build at Babelsberg, the manor was a mixture of old, worn & beautiful fabrics from different centuries. The sofas and walls represented the history of the house and a side of *Ayrs'* [Jim Broadbent] life that is deteriorating. There were many historical layers to the house and of his life, including from the Victorian era and collections of artifacts from his travels. This is when I introduced the Maori statues and strange bone sculptures. He married a modern lady,

and was a man of culture, with his love of music & art, which were reflected in the room. I had paintings from artists of the period made up, from Miro to Picasso and other lesser known artists of the cubism era. There were touches of some modern '30s pieces & flowers to bring the younger *Jocasta* [Halle Berry] into the otherwise quite oppressive world. The lampshades I designed were part of this “contemporary” world & look.



...The piano area had shelves full of old music sheets, '30s sculptures and records. There was a scene where they play music on the gramophone and drink cocktails to show the life that had come into the house since *Frobisher* [Ben Whishaw] had arrived and *Ayrs* had started to create music again.



...*Frobisher's* room was a neglected attic room in *Ayrs'* house. It was full of old disregarded pieces of furniture, symbolizing his station as *Ayrs* viewed it. *Jocasta*, however, began bringing a few modern pieces to the room to ensure he was comfortable, and because she was spending time there. So we have an old 19th century spindle-post bed & bedside tables with a pair of early '30s lamps, crisp beautiful bed linens and some comfortable 1930's chairs. This is mixed in with old English pieces of furniture like *Frobisher's* writing desk which had probably been in the attic for many years.

*Hotels chronicled the decline of Frobisher...from the smart Cambridge hotel to the slums of Edinburgh in the '30s:*

*Cambridge Hotel*



The interior of the *Cambridge Hotel* was shot on a location in Berlin. Red was for the lovers theme and to signify a very upscale hotel, hence the red, chic period wallpaper. The exterior was shot in Edinburgh to look '30s, similar to a Ritz Hotel of that period.

*The Laughing Cavalier*



*Frobisher's* seedy Edinburgh hotel *The Laughing Cavalier* was built on the stage, the exterior shot in Edinburgh. This was the end of his life. The hotel was decaying and worn, brown and colorless...a metaphor for his emotional state. The wallpaper & furniture were dirty, ripped from

a century before. Rotting food, wine and hand-written music sheets lay strewn about in a mess of mad creativity. He had no sleep or food...drunk wine and wrote *The Cloud Atlas Sextet*...until it was finally finished and he had no reason to continue to live.



...The bathroom was a combination of old period pieces I had purchased in Scotland from a period reclamation warehouse, smaller details came from London. My German leadman was fantastic at welding and he did a great job with the old Victorian copper pipes covering the walls...the bath was a very old copper one, which we painted for the backdrop to his dramatic and final end!

### *China shop*



Literally breaking free:

Every piece in the china shop was purchased. My UK team and I, with the help of the German prop master, found hundreds of period pieces of china...most of them had to be doubled. After I had dressed the space, I stayed for some of the shooting to reset, particularly for one of the last shots which was done from the balcony of the location. The crew, with the aid of a rig, literally dropped plates into the space below. It was very liberating! The crew and actors had such fun on this set. Yes....it was symbolic of a breaking free and based on a dream sequence in the book.

### *Cambridge College*



...  
*Sixsmith's* [James D'Arcy] college bedroom, based on the essence of '30s Cambridge college student life where *Sixsmith* still studied while *Frobisher* was in Scotland

### *Trains*



...  
The seats & cars were dressed for each era...'30s. '50s and 2012

# Nuclear plant mystery: San Francisco: 1973

Set Decorator Rebecca Alleway SDSA, Production Designer Uli Hanisch

## *Luisa Rey's apartment*



I think that it is easy to overdo the 1970s period with clichés rather than being character driven, so I was very clear about fabrics, furniture, colors & textures. The apartment was a history of *Luisa's* [Halle Berry] life and interests. There were subtle references of the Maori masks and textiles, which, with Africa, were a popular choice of textiles for trendy & liberal people from this era. The shelves were full of books from iconic feminist novelists, and this was carried through into the choice of photography on the walls. There were understated references from the late 60's/ early 70's...lamps, desks, kitchen utensils, records and posters on the wall.

I found out a few weeks after fabric sampling for *Luisa's* apartment, that the costume designer was making a suit for Halle Berry/*Luisa* out of the same beige corduroy fabric I had chosen for the sofa, so I knew we were all on the same page!

This was a great period for the new D.I.Y., and I have some fantastic '70s reference materials. The bed was a summarization of this period and a "homemade" look...a boat-style bunk, perfect for a studio apartment. The patchwork quilt was an iconic item from the period and gave the sense of *Luisa's* creativity and openness.

## *Sixsmith's hotel room*



Homage to all those '70s motel-hotels, the palette was in browns & beige with splashes of orange. This set was on location, but Uli built all of it, so we could see all of the room from any angle, including the ceiling. The bedspread and drapes were in vintage fabrics from this period. I choose a color that summed up the '70s, but that would also show the blood when *Sixsmith* is shot. I had to commission many repeats for this scene and make sure that the headboard material was easy to wipe clean quickly...in-between takes.

I was aware of the overlay that Tom wanted to do with the older *Sixsmith* in his hotel room and the almost 40-year flashback to *Frobisher* writing the Ewing journal letter, so this was very much thought about when I did the furniture floor plans for both the sets.

### *Nuclear plant*



All of the nuclear plant sets...offices, lobby & reception...were built within locations in Berlin.

### *Dr. Sixsmith's office*



This was meant to look as if someone had packed his belongings in a hurry, wanting to get rid of his presence. The walls had paperwork torn & ripped, so, apart from a few personal items sticking out of his box, it was meant to be rather sad and a statement of what this scientist's life had come to when faced with a huge & powerful corporation.

### *Lloyd Hooks' office*



We then have the polished and swanky office of mogul *Lloyd Hooks* [Hugh Grant] in comparison. The furniture was from the UK and Berlin...his desk was a beautiful late '60s/early '70s Italian rosewood hired from a dealer in Berlin. I hunted for the perfect designer pieces to give the magnate power look.

### *Sweatshop chase scene*



The location for the interior chase was a huge empty warehouse in Berlin, which we dressed to look like an illegal immigrant sweatshop. Upstairs, we had the workers ripping the heads off toys and pulling the stuffing out! It was full of bright plastic Mexican style baskets and old toys. Downstairs, the hundreds of Mexican workers sat at their machines- sewing and stuffing the new toys...chicks in EGGS... Every machine was fully practical and the extra's had lessons in sewing! This set took a lot of manpower to set up...just carrying 150 machines into the basement of this warehouse was a hard enough. I had made extensive ground plans and shown them to Tom previously to check camera positions, because it would have been too time-consuming to move them during the shoot.

All the boxes the eggs were being packed into had text and stamps from the *Sonmi* story, as if they were being sent to an Asian style country. I had a fantastic graphics lady in my set dec. team and she did a great job of producing some fabulous graphics for this set.

*Streets of San Francisco 1973* (shot in Glasgow, Scotland):



I had the traffic lights taken out and replaced with fully practical ones of the period from the States. All the signs were covered or replaced as well. Of course, all the shops opposite *Luisa's* apartment were dressed correctly for the time, but you will also see that I had the shops' signs named after characters in the film and dressed them accordingly. For example, *Vyvyan's Violins & Fine Instruments*...all the stories and characters had a shop!

## “Ghastly Ordeal”: London, Scotland: 2012

Set Decorator Rebecca Alleway SDSA, Production Designer Uli Hanisch

*London book launch party*



Hugh and Uli made plans to re-use the set after Hugh & Peter had shot on it for *Papa Song*. So the feeling of the space seems familiar when we return to shoot the posh *Starlight Bar* launch party. The bulbs hanging from the ceiling represented the stars and the connections with the universe and other stories and the tank was the connection with the water theme running through the film. The bar's sterile modern palette & design was a sophisticated reimagining of the future diner.

*Timothy Cavendish's flat*



Smalltime publisher *Timothy Cavendish's* [Jim Broadbent] house & publishing office: This was a set built at Babelsburg. Piles of books and shelves full of untold publications, certificates from poor quality courses, and dressing from his past & present life. The egg motif

appears quite clearly in his office above the old English fireplace. A safe, which is filmed through from the back, was built into the wall in his office.



The bathroom was an old run down English-style with cooker & washing machine to indicate that *Timothy Cavendish* was very much living in his office.

### *Aurora Country Estates*



Nightmarish “retirement home” where *Timothy Cavendish* & others are held against their will: Director Tom Tykwer points out re: *Ayrs’ Manor 1936/ Aurora Country Estates 2012...*

"It was once the chateau where *Ayrs*, the elderly composer, tries to imprison young *Frobisher*, and then a lifetime later it's him, reborn as *Cavendish*, who finds himself imprisoned in the place where he used to be the warden."



As Tom mentioned, this was *Ayrs’* house repainted and dressed. Many large old houses in the UK can't afford to keep going, so they are often turned into businesses such as old people's homes. Uli wanted a strong contrast from *Ayrs*, and it was treated very much like it might have been in real life. The beautiful cornice and moldings were painted over with bright paint, all the wonderful period features consciously lost to make way for the hideous nightmare of this retirement home...a funny, over-bright and distasteful set that leaves you feeling a bit cold and uncomfortable. The set had to feel like it could have been a hotel that *Cavendish* was checking into at night and then reveals itself for the true sad, empty nightmare it was.

### *Aurora House 2012/Ayrs Manor 1936 Exteriors*



For the 2012 depiction, we added a conservatory and changed out the flowers and vines from the *Ayrs* period, re-dressed with generic flowers and pots. Like the interior, we were linking both these sets & periods.

### *Scottish pub*



Pub in Scotland where *Aurora House* escapees start a melee:

We shot this on a location in a bar in Berlin. We had to completely re-dress the location...being a bar in Berlin! So we brought in Scottish-style pub furniture, pennants & art, re-labeled all the bottles, etc. It was such a big stunt scene that I made up many copies of the furniture in a lighter weight wood, for the stunt team to throw about. A team of prop makers at Babelsberg produced this for me.

### *Ursula's house*



*Ursula's* [Susan Sarandon] house was meant to be the in the same house where the young teenage *Cavendish* & *Ursula* were caught in the parents' bedroom. *Cavendish* revisits in 2012 and the story evolves. The original scene takes place in the 1950s. So, once again, we dressed for two different time periods. All the tones and wallpaper choices for 2012 were from the recurring theme & palettes, with warm tones and reds for the intimate & loving moments.

...*Cavendish* writes the book *The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish* at the desk in front of the window 2012. This book is later made into a DVD starring Tom Hanks as *Timothy Cavendish*, which *Somni* uses as inspiration in 2144 to stand up against tyranny.

## Dystopian Neo-Seoul 2144

Set Decorator Peter Walpole SDSA, Production Designer Hugh Bateup

### *Papa Song diner*



*Papa Song* fast food chain – the ultimate in concept consumerism:

An interesting concept...cold and grey when everything was powered down at night, but vibrant and colorful during the day. Candy red is a bold color, but it made a great backdrop to the extreme costumes the fabricant servers wear. This set did have a huge component of VFX elements, i.e. the floor and the advertising. We then dealt with the backbone and the finer dressing. The tables and chairs were built and designed for the set in our own workshops. The egg chairs took a little time to develop, to get their proportions correct and that the scale fitted

into the set as a whole. A clever little green stand was then developed for them, so they appeared to float in the film.



...Fabricant quarters:

Colorless, cold grey concrete & metal, they were as small as they looked, on purpose. The fabricant lived in uncomfortable surroundings – the consumer world was outside, another world to them, entirely. So we made their quarters cell-like, with minimal dressing...which sometimes can be a hard task, as the less there is, the more obvious it is...much different than a set cluttered with dressing that gives an overall impression.



...Dystopian streets of *New-Seoul*:

This was so much fun and the last set we dressed on the film...a street built in the studio, with an eclectic mix of modern and old, with street sellers and pole dancers. Although you don't see as much as I would have hoped, due to the 200 plus extras, I think it gave the feeling of a classic Asian street market. Except perhaps that we were selling deep fried rats—plastic toys dipped in sawdust, undefined pieces of animals created from melted rubber then painted with flesh colors, colored sands and colored molded shapes representing spices and fruits. The dressing team let their imaginations run, with references from India, Thailand and Vietnam.

...Totalitarian interiors – more concrete, ominous, inescapable:

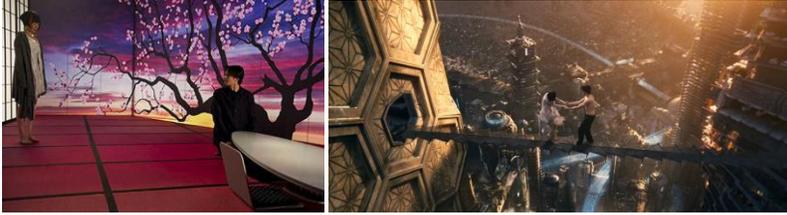


...*Archivist's* [James D'Arcy] interrogation room...A small built set, with only a table and two chairs, made and developed in our workshops and painted to complement the set. Shapes were important as we do see them in profile – simple but interesting was the brief.

...Execution chambers for *Somni 451* [Doona Bae]...On location in Berlin, the same brief as the *Archivist* room. Simple but interesting, bearing in mind the fantastic location, which was the Berlin Crematorium.

...Fabricant factory & replicant recycling abattoir...This was part set, part VFX, the development of the set between the designer and the VFX dept, guided us to the style of dressing – very utilitarian – clinical and ultimate. Much research went into machinery and the efficiency that is used to dispatch animals for human consumption...not the most enjoyable research I have ever done!

*Hae-Joo Chang's apartment* [Jim Sturgess]:



Simple functional elements, with changing walls...this set was quite a challenge, a few elements that had to sit right with the set and not jar the vision. I never want to make a statement with a piece of dressing that detracts from the acting or the storyline, no one will thank you if the audience is trying to work out what the large thing is behind the actors heads and not listening to the dialogue.

*Hae-Joo Chang & Sonmi:*

A set built in Babelsburg, I wanted the slum love nest of *Hae-Joo Chang & Sonmi* to echo the exterior streets in its eclectic mix of dressing. We used many reclaimed items and burnt pieces of vinyl floor covering for the walls and floors, layer upon layer of different materials went to make the structure. Like any true ghetto/slum, it was built and dressed with what one could find that fitted the brief and story line...old Eastern bloc plumbing mixed with second-hand furniture and oriental small dressing from the local markets.

## Post-Apocalyptic 24<sup>th</sup> Century: Hawaii 2321, other planet 2346

Set Decorator Peter Walpole SDSA, Production Designer Hugh Bateup

Production Designer Hugh Bateup relates re: Zachry's [Tom Hanks] village...

"We didn't want to present this society as too rudimentary, as if they had reverted to the Dark Ages. We decided they were two or three generations beyond a world collapse and had learned how to survive and do things again. They made things from the materials available to them, what they scavenged from cities. They're artisans, not barbarians."



Walpole elucidates further...

The research and development... was very interesting for this story, as a Post-Apocalyptic world, we had to decide what would have survived and what would be useful to adapt and convert into everyday items.

Plastic was high on our list...a product that doesn't decay and, if it has survived heat, becomes a very durable medium to weave, bound and mold. After some R & D we decided that, perhaps rubber tyres/tires had survived in some form, and we used this as a basis for the wheel on *Zachry's* cart. They were practical for ease of use, not too much of a statement and did not look

like the Stone Age. The tires were stuffed with a combination of shredded plastic and straw, and revealed as such, not just designed to look like it. Many other plastic objects were used, for instance, giant water and oil containers were cut and adapted for raised flower beds, bee hives or water catchment tanks.

We also considered items that are washed up on the beach every day...drinking bottles, boxes, containers of every shape, packing case strips, all the hard durable plastic that is so difficult to get rid of...glass polished by the waves would be used for decoration. Anything that is not biodegradable we thought could be turned into cooking utensils, light sources and tools.

We then took reference from people who live 'off grid'...and how one adapts and survives, growing food stuffs, keeping bees, milking goats, making mead, cooking on open fires...all of which were suggested in the film. For continuity, the small herd of goats *Zachry* is seen tending while at the Mallorcan site was transported to Saxony for the additional filming.

#### *Abbess's hut*



*Abbess's* [Susan Sarandon] hut interior...an eclectic mix of herbs and flowers, spices and berries, amulets both traditional and modern, roughly woven fabrics, some animal skins and bird feathers, and lots of homemade beeswax candles. And a sculpture of *Sonmi*. For me, this was a combination of shaman, witch doctor, soothsayer and a wise-woman.

#### *Zachry's hut*



*Zachry's* family's hut interior:

The hardest part here was not to make it look to like a hippy commune, but with the help of my team and some great local artists we developed and made almost everything. It was a sculptural piece that grew as we went along, discovering the best way to make a practical mosaic table, chairs or beds from reclaimed sources, woven fabric from wool and plastic strips combined. Because of the style we adopted, our mood boards were just about materials...once we had developed something, we then had a show and tell for Hugh and the directors, and afterwards adapted the items to their suggestions.

#### *Kona warrior horse*



...*Meronym's [Halle Berry] predecessors' derelict mountaintop colony:*

- Technicals, including *orisons*: The *orison* was a prop that was conceived by the directors. The control room was a built set...a very simple control table was designed and then made by our dressing team from plexiglass and insulation tubing. Discussion went on between ourselves and the VFX team as to their requirements to enable them to enhance and complete the design
- Sculpture of *Sonmi*



This was based on the actress, and sculpted in our model shop as a maquette. Once the final design had been decided, a few were made and painted in different finishes to see what color complements the statue...the smaller sculpture in golden bronze stands on the altar in the *Abbess's* hut. [See above.] The giant one in the hall with the skeletons is a VFX that was based on our model.

- Bodies and other signs of apocalyptic event: Usually an expensive dress, bodies and skeletons, but we have our greens lady to thank for this. As she was helping the dressing team age modern medical skeletons, she coated a pair of woman's tights in latex, mixed with an ochre paint, stretched over the plastic bones and left to dry – and by magic we had our mummified humans! That's how it works sometimes.

...*New world, new planet 2346 encampment:*

This was a combination of a Zen garden and an unknown rock planet shot against green. Hugh had designed a rocky outcrop, base colors of dark pinks and reds. We found succulent plants with pinks, purple and red tones. Grey stones were then used as the Zen-esque surround, and at the rear was the new style of abode, a beautifully designed structure covered in fabric. I added a macramé shawl from *Zachry's* house and a few other elements from his old life on the island. If you look carefully to the right of the entrance, you'll discover a giant wind chime made from the top half of a circular chrome clothes rack....I hope the costume department are not still looking for it!!!!!!