**RESEARCH**

A **costume designer** is a person whose responsibility is to design [costumes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costume) for a [film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film) or [stage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stage_(theatre)) production. He or she is considered part of the "production team", alongside the [director](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_director), [scenic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scenic_design) and [lighting designers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lighting_designer) as well as the sound designer. The costume designer might also collaborate with a hair/wig master or a makeup designer. In European theatre the role is somewhat different as the theatre designer will design both costume and scenic elements.

Costume designers will typically seek to enhance a character's persona, and/or to create an evolving plot of color, changing social status or period through the visual design of garments and other means of dressing, distorting and/or enhancing the body - within the framework of the director's vision.

At the same time, the designer must ensure that the designs allow the actor to move in a manner consistent with the historical period and enables the actor to execute the director's blocking of the production without damage to the garments. Additional considerations include the durability and washability of garments, particularly in extended runs.

The designer must work in consultation with not only the director, but the set and lighting designers to ensure that the overall design of the production works together.

The designer needs to possess strong artistic capabilities as well as a thorough knowledge of pattern development, draping, drafting, textiles and costume/fashion history as well as awareness of poise when in period dress, and be sensitive to the creative direction that the performer wants to take his/her character.

**Responsibilities –**

A costume designer

* creates the look of a character in film, television or in a stage production through the costumes
* sketches out the designs/ideas for the costumes
* selects fabric and color combinations
* acts as Shop Master or Mistress
* supervises construction

**Types of costume designer -** Professional costume designers generally fall into three types: freelance, residential, and academic.

* A **freelance designer** is hired for a specific production by a theatre, dance or opera company, and may or may not actually be local to the theater that he or she is designing for. A freelancer is traditionally paid in three installments: Upon hire, on the delivery of final renderings, and opening night of the production. Freelancers are not obligated to any exclusivity in what projects they are working on, and may be designing for several theatres concurrently.
* A **residential designer** is hired by a specific theatre, dance or opera company for an extended series of productions. This can be as short as a summer stock contract, or may be for many years. A residential designer's contract may limit the amounts of freelance work they are allowed to accept. Unlike the freelancer, a residential designer is consistently "on location" at the theater, and is readily at hand to work with the costume studio and his or her other collaborators. Residential designers tend to be more established than strict freelancers, but this is not always the case.
* An **academic designer** is one who holds professorship at a school. The designer is primarily an instructor, but may also act as a residential designer to varying degrees. They are often free to freelance, as their schedule allows. In the past, professors of costume design were mostly experienced professionals that may or may not have had formal post-graduate education, but it has now become increasingly common to require a professor to have at least a [Master of Fine Arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Fine_Arts) in order to teach.

Both residential and academic designers are generally also required to act as Shop Master or Mistress of an onsite costume shop, in addition to designing productions. In a resident theatre, there is almost always a shop staff of stitchers, drapers, cutters and craft artisans. In an academic environment the shop "staff" is generally students, who are learning about costume design and construction. Most universities require costume design students to work a specified number of hours in the shop as part of their course work.

**Societies and trade organizations -** Costume design is a [unionized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_union) field. In America, costume designers (and directors of photography, camera operators, camera assistants and still photographers) are represented by Local 892.

[USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Scenic_Artists) is the union that represents costume designers. Although most professional designers are union members, USA has relatively few collective bargaining agreements with theatres when compared with other theatrical unions. However, most major US opera companies do have CBAs with USA. The majority of union contract work for designers is on a project by project basis, not as a part of Collective Bargaining Agreements with theatrical establishments.

