

Setting subtle scenes

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Eyes tend to pass over a movie set or background, but in actuality, there is an incredible amount of work that goes into conceptualizing, designing and then constructing a movie or theater set. And in fact, care is taken so that you don't notice, but what remains in the back still enhances the overall feeling of the action.

"It's definitely an art," says Eric Rogers, who just finished a month of shooting his film "Elizabeth Gunness." "It's a whole craft unto itself."

[Q] Why is set design important to a film? A huge part of directing a film is "mise-en-scene." You're creating through the colors, the lighting, that sort of thing. But one of the big ways you do that is with set design.

[Q] Do you ever plan a film around a set? Since it was an independent film with small budget, I actually wrote it around a location, which was my own home. So the majority of the film takes place in my own home, but we had to transform the home to make it look like the character would live here.

[Q] What sort of challenges did you face with this film? We have these big windows, and we had to constantly worry about what was outside. As far as building a set goes, you have to make sure that there's room in there for the lighting. You have to accommodate where the lights are gonna go, how you're gonna move the camera around. Trying to create the proper mood, but making it functional for the camera crew as well.

[creating a set]

Rogers enlisted the help of his wife, Jo Carol Mitchell-Rogers, to design the set for the film. Trained in painting, Mitchell-Rogers says that her understanding of visual arts helped her with the film.

"I think there are a lot of ways where fundamental color and design are really advantageous when you approach such a project," Mitchell Rogers says. "I really tried to immerse myself in trying to figure out who (Elizabeth Gunness) was and what she would be like, and tried to create a series of interior spaces. I think if the production design is done well, it's contributing to the content of the piece, but the audience isn't even aware of it."



*Jo Carol Mitchell-Rogers opted for a set that would speak to the characters' personalities, as well as a specific color theme.
Photo courtesy of Eric Rogers.*