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The Art and Craft of Screenwriting
An Exhibit

> *"Within the structure of Hollywood, writers are essential but undervalued. This problem of diminished value is reinforced by their virtual invisibility to the general public."*
> Jorja Prover. *No One Knows Their Names. 1994.*

While interning at the Museum of the Moving Image in the summer of 2008, I had the opportunity to access their collections. Among the many artifacts, the Museum houses over a thousand scripts, several with original handwritten notations by directors, script supervisors, actors, and art directors, donated by industry professionals who used those pages as tools for the completion of the films they were employed in.

Considering the current renovation and expansion project the Museum is undergoing, the timing seemed to be appropriate for a proposal that would incorporate a screenwriting section within the Museum's core exhibit *Behind the Screen*. With the goal of revealing the many processes involved in creating a moving image, the exhibit transports the audience to an off camera space where hundreds of professionals work in the development, production, exhibition, and distribution of a moving image.

Following a first draft, I had a meeting with the Museum's Executive Director, who encouraged me to follow up with a more detailed, space-oriented design. As discussed with the Director, the proposal for the exhibit should consider the following stages: 1) A core exhibit using material housed in the Museum's Collection Department; 2) External material that could

be included in the exhibit; and 3) Material the Museum has to produce for its incorporation into the exhibit.

While drafting the proposal, I decided to outline the exhibit as I envisioned it while incorporating specific requests from the Museum's administration. The following document is divided into two main sections addressing issues concerning the Museum's collection of scripts and the design of the exhibit. The first section explains the reasoning behind the need for a script inventory and the methodology behind its design. It also includes the cataloguing of specific scripts, a suggestion for the cataloguing of additional titles, and finally the drafting of a policy and methodology of acquisition of scripts that could be use by the Museum to enhance the collection. An appendix with the catalogued records is included. The second section discuses the gallery space, the selection of artifacts for the exhibit –including theme and object rotation- and proposes an installation layout through two original sketches. The appendix for this section includes details on the selected artifacts. To conclude, the proposal contains a series of exhibit-related programs, such as educational workshops and film screenings, for the Museum to consider.

Why Screenwriting?

While the screenwriter performs a key role within the film and television industries, the general public does not have a clear understanding of the reach of the screenwriter's work. Audiences complain about bad stories and critics condemn screenwriters when a narrative is too loose or a plot too predictable. Yet, when the film or television series becomes a success, the recognition tends to go toward the actors or the director.

While neglected, screenwriters are the ones who create the film in their imagination and on paper before it can be transferred onto the screen. Scripts are not only the first step toward the production of a film or television series, they are also the guiding tool all departments involved in the realization of these moving images refer to in order to fulfill their part.

Furthermore, scripts are educational tools. Through the study of a script, its components, and its role within the production of a film or series, one develops a better understanding of the industry's structure and processes.

The Script Collection

Creating an Inventory

In order to design an exhibit based on the scripts housed in the Museum's Collection Department it was first necessary to create a comprehensive inventory of the material. Such a record needed to include, not only the name and location of the script, but also information that will facilitate curatorial decisions when designing an exhibit. The fields selected to identify the scripts could be separated into three categories: 1) Those that are already assigned by the Museum, such as the call number, storage location, provenance, and the artifact class, work type and category; 2) Those pulled from the artifact itself, such as the title, the author, work version,

and date; and 3) Those that are left to the discretion of the person preparing the inventory in accordance to the list's specific use, such as the released title, genre, historical notes, and a scale to identify notation and exhibit value.

While not an exact reflection, the selection of these fields attempted to follow those in the Museum's collections management software, *OpenCollections,* to facilitate future record migration.

Cataloguing Selected Scripts

Scripts selected to be included in the gallery exhibit were catalogued following the Museum's guidelines. Catalogued records are part of *OpenCollections*, the Museum of the Moving Image's custom, web-based collections management and access software application available at http://collection.movingimage.us. There was also some conversation about making the whole script inventory accessible to the public. The initial idea is to create an interphase in *OpenCollections'* home page that would allow the user to browse and search within the script collection only. The goal is not only to make the titles available, but to use this inventory as a pilot test and evaluate the concept of accessibility of incomplete records. If successful, the Museum is planning to continue by posting online inventories of some of their other collection categories, such as movie posters. See catalogued records in Appendix A.

Draft for a Policy of Acquisition

Policies for the acquisition of scripts should take into account the Museum's existing general collecting policies. Artifacts are eligible for acquisition by the Museum if they meet one or more of the following general guidelines (as of August 4, 2005):

- Film, television, and digital media artifacts relating to production, distribution, marketing, merchandising, exhibition or reception.

- Artifacts illustrating the history of New York film production, especially as they help interpret the Museum's landmark Astoria Studios site.

- Artifacts that illuminate or interpret other artifacts in the collection or support specific Museum exhibits and educational projects.

- Artifacts of exceptional artistic or historic importance or provenance.

When considering the accession of scripts, the Museum should take into account a specific set of criteria. They should be:

- Original manuscripts

- Original scripts with annotations

- Working versions of scripts that vary from the scripts published

- Working versions of scripts that vary from the version used for the production of the script

- Scripts from live shows that have not been recorded (such in the case of some of the live shows in the Golden Age of TV).

- Scripts from films that have not been preserved and are today lost (such as most of the silent era).

- Scripts that complement the Museum's other scripts, such as alternate versions, other episodes in a series, complementary annotations, etc.

- Scripts of exceptional artistic or historic importance.

- Scripts of significant provenance.

- Scripts with proven exhibition value.

The Museum will consider the refusal or deaccession of scripts according to the following criteria:

- Exact replicas of scripts already housed in the collection

- Photocopies of scripts without notes and which are identical to those publicly published

- Scripts created from the finished film

- Theater plays

Draft for a Methodology of Acquisition

In addition to evaluating script donations in accordance to the acquisition policy, outreach for completing and improving the current collection of scripts could be undertaken by the Museum of the Moving Image. The following steps could be used as a guideline:

- Script Inventory:

    o Study the current script inventory and identify its strengths and weaknesses.

    o Decide if it is in the Museum's best interest to reinforce weak areas or focus on the strong ones.

    o Evaluate if it would be worthwhile for the Museum to specialize in a particular era, author, medium, studio, etc…

- Museum's Collections:

    o Try to locate scripts that correspond with the Museum's interest in New York film productions and Astoria Studios.

- o Consider the Museum's collection of materials from a specific film or television show and search for the corresponding script.

- Script Significance:

  - o Create a list of scripts with artistic or historic importance.

  - o Identify the author or other people who worked with the script and who may still have a copy.

- Provenance:

  - o Review lists of previous donors or other contacts.

  - o In the case of people involved in production, update their films and television credits.

  - o Evaluate if you are interested in obtaining those scripts.

The Script Exhibit

Exhibit Goals

The main purpose of *The Art and Craft of Screenwriting* is to incorporate the script into the Museum's core exhibit *Behind the Screen.* In addition, the exhibit will:

- Showcase fine examples of screenwriting.

- Create a better understanding of the screenwriting process (from the generation of original ideas and writing process, to the adaptation and the rewrites).

- Generate public awareness on the role of a script within the production of a film or television episode.

- Foster the role of the screenwriter within the film and television industries.

- Recognize screenwriters who left a mark on the history of screenwriting or who have affected, through their scripts, the history of moving images.

Considering the Gallery Space

Taking into consideration the current layout of *Behind the Screen*, the most appropriate space to place a screenwriting section is where the current catalogue monitors are installed. This gallery space offers a counter, a computer and monitor connection, a curved wall, and a side wall. The counter can be used as the base for a display case. It could be modified in two different ways, 1) constructing an elevated Plexiglas case to protect the object, or 2) by creating something resembling a drawer with a see through cover, such as the displays used in other neighboring gallery exhibits. It is also important to consider that the current counter is 11.25 inches, too narrow to lay bounded scripts (which measure between 11.25 and 11.75) above it. Scripts will have to be displayed vertically or at an angle.

While access to the online catalog is certainly important, priority should be given to the display of artifacts that can only be appreciated at the Museum. The catalog can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection. On a second note, finding an alternate location for a monitor and a keyboard within the Museum's galleries will be easier than clearing a currently occupied gallery area to place the scripts.
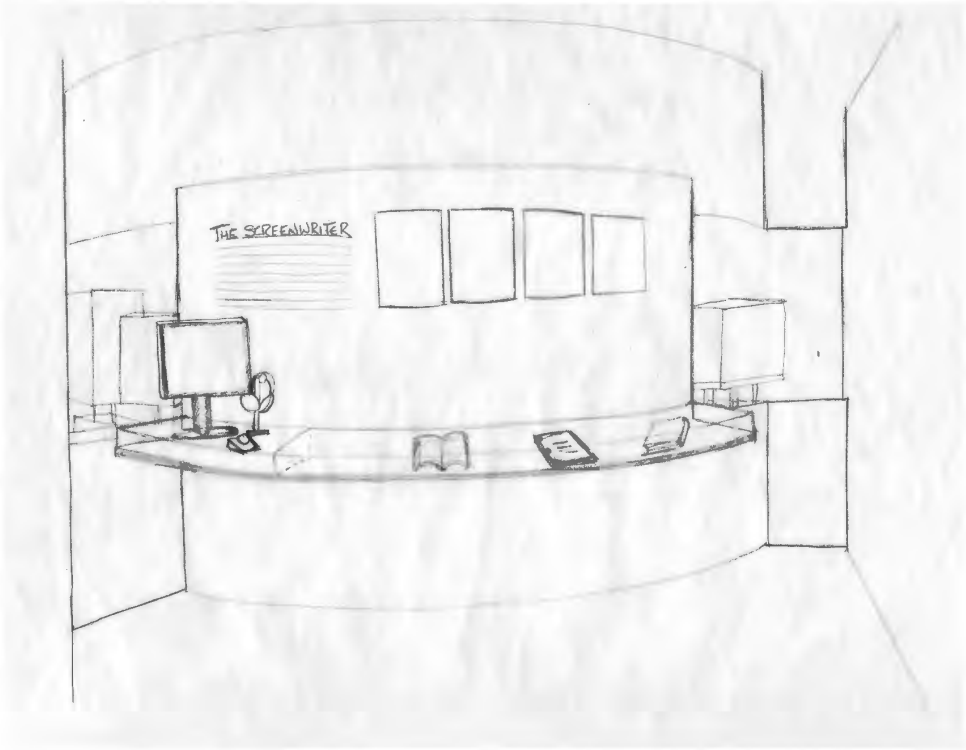
The Design

The three different display spaces with a proposed layout for the installation of the screenwriting exhibit, is detailed below.

Sketch 1

THE SCREENWRITER

Sketch 2

THE SCREENWRITER
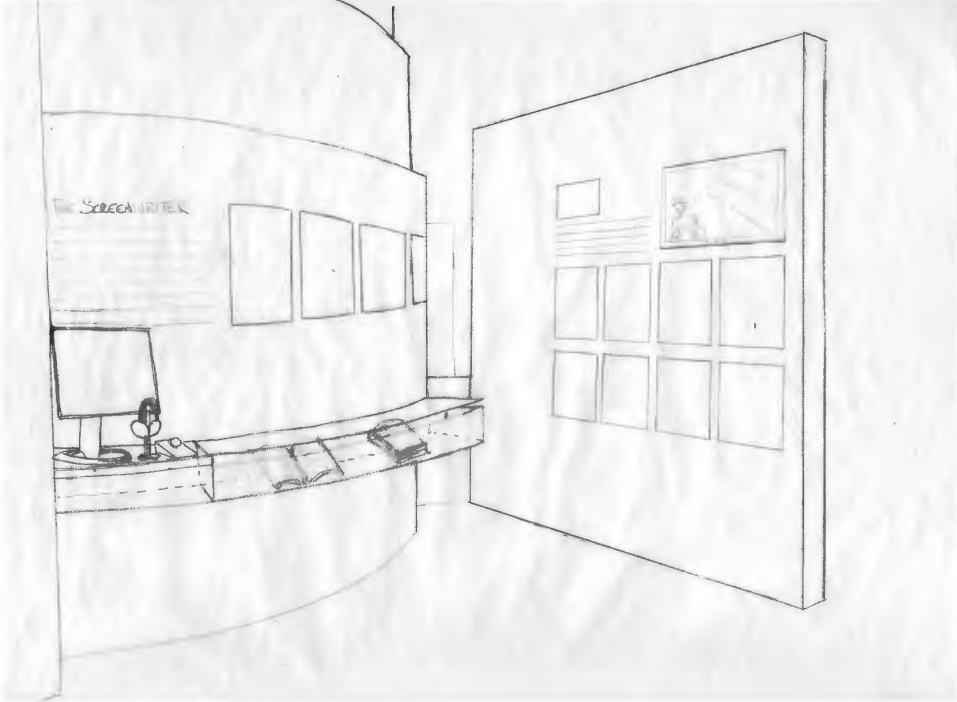
Stage 1: Artifacts and Installation

The proposed installation plan corresponds to the first stage, which calls for the design of a core exhibit using material housed in the Museum's Collections Department. The theme for this first step is "The Script as a Working Tool" and will feature several scripts in which annotations by different people involved in the production of the films illustrate how they were used as a guide for their job. The exhibit will also feature two of the most significant scripts housed at the Museum, those from the films *Taxi Driver* and *Network*. Both scripts were donated to the Museum by script supervisor Kay Chapin. They include extensive and detailed annotations, have color pages corresponding to different revisions, and come accompanied by continuity photographs, daily records, scene breakdowns, and other production information.

A text describing the role of the screenwriter will be placed on the curved wall together with a selection of script pages that illustrate the uses of "The Script as a Working Tool." These pages could be framed and mounted on the wall or, ideally, part of a slide show screened onto a large flat screen monitor. This last resource allows for the showcase of a greater quantity of material, better visualization, and easy rotation. A slide show will also seize the attention of the public in a way that static framed pages may not. The scripts selected for this section are not necessarily significant in terms of their artistry or historic importance. They have been selected because of their didactic nature. The different kinds of annotations these scripts contain generate a dialogue between the artifact, its original user, and the audience. See Appendix B for the list of selected scripts.

This wall will also include a photograph of a script in use. The Museum houses a series of behind-the-screen photographs that illustrate the uses of the script. Among other examples, one photograph features a director conversing with his actors over the pages of the script, while

another one shows a script supervisor reviewing her notes. These photographs have been included in the script inventory for easy access. They have been recorded with their corresponding category and work type.

The display case will hold three different bounded scripts from the film *Network*, all open to the same page and each containing a different set of notations. Two of them contain annotations by the film's script supervisor Kay Chapin highlighting scene divisions, changes in dialogue, and continuity issues. One of the copies has a photograph attached for wardrobe continuity purposes. The third copy contains director Sidney Lumet's handwritten notations. Scenes in this script are crossed with red crayon, indicating they shot completion. In addition, the cover of one of the scripts featuring Paddy Chayefsky's signature and several articles about the film's script, as it was kept by Kay Chapin, will be included. Details on the selected scripts could be found in Appendix B.

A touch screen monitor with headphones will be placed above the display case. The monitor will offer the option of watching the following material: 1) Clips illustrating the scenes from *Network* chosen for exhibition, 2) A slideshow of scanned pages from the scripts for close viewing. The slideshow will include pages in their normal scale and zoom versions that will improve the legibility of the notes. 3) Access to *OpenCollections'* catalogued entries of *Taxi Driver* and *Network*. Additional material, such as interviews with people involved in the creation of the script or who use the script as a tool for their job, may be included when available.

The side wall will showcase a sequence of eight framed pages from *Taxi Driver* and a flat screen monitor with a clip of the selected scene. A photograph of screenwriter Paul Schrader and a short text about the script could also be included. The selected scene is number 187, in which Iris (Jodie Foster) takes Travis (Robert De Niro) to her room. The scene consists of eight colored

pages annotated by script supervisor Kay Chapin and includes an attached photograph kept for continuity purposes. The colored pages will provide an excellent opportunity to explain the revision process in the captions. There are several other scenes and/or combination of scenes and other material from the script that will offer an interesting experience and that could be considered for eventual rotations. Details on the selected scene and alternative scenes can be found in Appendix B.

Stage 2: External Materials to be Consider for Incorporation

The following list contains existing external artifacts, films, and other materials related to the scripts selected that could be located for incorporation into the screenwriting exhibit.

- Clips from both films *Taxi Driver* and *Network.*

- *Taxi Driver's* storyboard: The book *Taxi Driver*, published by BFI, addresses the existence of a storyboard from the film. A page from the document is actually reproduced in the book. The storyboard is also featured in documentaries on *Taxi Driver*.

- Paul Schrader's notes: The short documentary on Schrader's work, *God's Lonely Man (2007),* showed his notes on *Taxi Driver* written on a legal notepad. This particular page had a list of events that would later become the film's separate scenes.

- Scripts belonging to other people involved with *Taxi Driver* such as Martin Scorsese, Robert De Niro, Jodie Foster, and Cybil Sheppard. These versions of the script will vary and complement the hold by the Museum. They may include notes particularly related to the director and performer's roles within the film.

- The Museum's series of interviews with filmmakers, Pinewood Dialogues, has an audiovisual conversation with Paul Schrader. The interview should be scanned for excerpts on *Taxi Driver* and the process of screenwriting.

- The special collector's edition DVD of *Taxi Driver* includes, among its special features, several documentaries and interviews that could be useful for the exhibit. The Museum could contact the documentary's copyright holders and ask for permission to use the documentaries or specific footage from the interviews. Directed and produced by Greg Carson from DZN: The Design Group, the DVD includes the following material that specifically address the creation and uses of the script:

    o *Producing Taxi Driver (2007).* Interview with producer Michael Phillips who briefly discusses how he got the script.

    o *God's Lonely Man (2007).* A short documentary that profiles screenwriter Paul Schrader and examines the theme of loneliness in the film.

    o *Storyboard to Film Comparison.* This feature shows images from the storyboard and the corresponding film scenes in split screen. Includes an optional introduction by Scorsese.

- Scripts belonging to other people involved with *Network*, such as Faye Dunaway and Robert Duvall. These versions of the script may vary with the ones we have. They may include notes related to the performer's roles within the film.

- The collector's edition of *Network* features additional material relevant to the exhibit. These include the short documentaries.

    o *Network: The World and Words of Paddy Chayefsky* (2006) – 12 min.

    o *Network: The Cast, the Characters* (2006) – 13 min.

- Photographs, posters and any other visual materials that illustrate the scripts would be pertinent.

In addition, a list of audiovisual interviews with screenwriters could be added to illustrate the general process of screenwriting considered. The Museum could approach producers of already existing interviews and reach an agreement for their use in the exhibit. While these materials may not be related to *Network* or *Taxi Driver*, they support the idea of the script as a working tool. At the same time, the theme and artifact rotation suggested in this proposal could make use of the diversity of these interviews to illustrate the chosen topic. Some possibilities include:

- *The Dialogue: Learning from the Masters* (2007). Producer Aleks Horvat describes the series as "70-90 minute in-depth discussions, [where] more than two dozen of today's most successful screenwriters share their work habits, methods and inspirations, secrets of the trade, business advice, and eye-opening stories from life in the trenches of the film industry. Each screenwriter discusses his or her filmography in great detail and breaks down the mechanics of one favorite scene from their produced work." The series is hosted by the President of Production of New Line Cinema, Mike De Luca, and journalist Jay A. Fernandez. Featured screenwriters include Callie Khouri (*Thelma & Louise*, 1991) and Paul Haggis (*Crash*, 2004), Jose Rivera (Motorcycle Diaries, 2004). It also has study guides for teachers and students. More information at: http://www.thedialogueseries.com.

- Produced by the American Film Foundation, *Screenwriters: Word into Image* (1983) includes interviews with six screenwriters: William Goldman (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, 1969), Robert Towne (*The Last Detail*, 1973), Eleanor Perry (*David and*

Lisa, 1961), Neil Simon (*The Goodbye Girl*, 1977), Carl Foreman (*High Noon*, 1952), and Paul Mazursky (*An Unmarried Woman*, 1977). The series of 30 minute interviews was directed by Terry Sanders and Freida Lee Mockare. For more information: http://www.americanfilmfoundation.com.

- *Tales From the Script* (2008). Writer/director Peter Hanson's documentary film and nonfiction book project about the lives of Hollywood screenwriters slated for release in 2009. The project features interviews with Frank Darabont (*The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994), William Goldman (*The Princess Bride,* 1987), David Hayter (*Watchmen*, 2009), Paul Schrader (*Taxi Driver*, 1976), and David S. Ward (*The Sting*, 1973), among others. For more information: http://www.grandriverfilms.com/.

- *Creative Screenwriter Magazine* has a weekly podcast available for free through iTunes and other podcast services. Each week, they interview and analyze a different script from a contemporary film. Latest examples include *Synecdoche* (2008), *The Secret Life of Bees* (2008), *Choke* (2008), and *Away from Her* (2006).

Stage 3: Material the Museum Could Create to Enhance the Exhibit

The following elements could be incorporated into the gallery's monitor. While most of the material suggested already exists, copyright issues and acquisition inconveniences may make it simpler for the Museum to produce its own version.

- Interviews: Paul Schrader, Robert De Niro, Martin Scorsese, and Michael Phillips could be interviewed in relation to *Taxi Driver*. Sidney Lumet, Fay Dunaway, Robert Duvall could be interviewed in relation to *Network*.

- Audio files with the narration of the scripts: An audio track with the reading of the scene selected to be showcased in the gallery could be recorded. The audience could decide to play it while looking at the script pages or a mute version of the film's scene. In this way they can compare both the words and the images at the same time, since they do not have to read the pages themselves.

- Partial scan of the scripts: Scans could be digitally mastered to separate the page's information in various layers. One for the script itself, and others for different sets of annotations. These different layers could then be brought back together by the user through the gallery's monitor.

- Catalogued records with photographs and/or scans of the scripts. These records will include descriptive information on the artifact and historical notes on the creation of the scripts.

Themes and Artifact Rotation

Artifacts could be rotated once every six months to reflect different themes and to showcase the variety of the script collection housed at the Museum. Themes can also be curated to reflect film or educational programs organized by the Museum's department. Several themes already emerged from the compiled inventory:

- Sitcoms: *Seinfeld, Cheers, Sybil*.

- Writers turned screenwriters: Truman Capote, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, David Mamet.

- Women screenwriters: Eleanor Perry, Nora Ephron, Carol Sobieski.

- Specific author: Paddy Chayefsky, Paul Mazursky, Brian De Palma.

- TV Golden Age: Rod Serling, Reginald Rose, Gore Vidal.

- Case Study: *Flashdance*. We have two different versions of the script written by two different screenwriters.

- Adaptations: *A View from the Bridge* (base on a play by Arthur Miller), *The Bell Jar* (base on a novel by Sylvia Plath), *Long Day's Journey into Night* (based on a play by Eugene O'Neill).

- Children: *The Great Foodini, Our Gang, The Wiz, Muppets in Manhattan* (the last two include storyboards).

Interactive Exhibit

Following the Museum's goal of maintaining exhibits accessible and interactive for the audience, I suggest the inclusion of a series of educational activities related to the uses of a script. I intend these activities to be interactive and interdisciplinary through the incorporation of *Behind the Screen's* current exhibition and technology.

- Given a scene as a hand out, school groups have to discuss what the different departments that work toward the completion of a film look for in the screenplay. While the special effects department pays attention to explosions, the sound and music departments are particularly aware of a radio playing in the background, and costume departments take into consideration the outfits described in the scene. The group can walk around *Behind the Screen* discussing these issues while observing the different areas of the exhibit.

- Given a prose paragraph that includes description and dialogue, the audience has to re-format it as a screenplay, considering scene headings, character names, etc.

- Given a written scene, the audience has to put together a series of loose story board images or still photographs. Once completed, the images could play as a film in accordance (or not) to the written scene.

- Audience could be given a template of a script scene with blank spaces instead of dialogue lines. After watching the silent scene on a screen, they can write their own dialogue. Through this process, a scene could be transformed into a melodrama or gain a completely different meaning. The result could be recorded in a fashion similar to that used in the dub station.

- School groups could be given a scene from a script and reenact it themselves, using live performance or illustrated characters and sets. These performances could be recorded at the flipbook or stop animation stations.

Exhibit Related Programs

While the Museum of the Moving Image is currently interested in limiting the script exhibit to an artifact based gallery display, the topic allows for the creation of related activities that would integrate the Museum's Collection with the Museum's other departments.

- *Film Programs*: Film series focusing on screenwriting could be organized in conjunction with the exhibit. Some of the possibilities include the screening of films about screenwriters, films by specific salient screenwriters, and films with award winning screenplays.

- *Educational Activities*: Screenwriting workshops could be offered. Classes could be designed according to age and/or medium. In addition to attracting new groups of students, these workshops could be offered as complements to other educational

initiatives, compelling students to move on to other courses being offered by the Museum. A student that participates in the screenwriting workshop could then sign up for an animation workshop in order to see his script transfer onto a screen.

- *Pinewood Dialogues*: The Museum's series of interviews with filmmakers already includes conversations with screenwriters Buck Henry (*The Graduate*, 1967) and Robert Towne (*Chinatown*, 1974), and writer-directors Todd Haynes (*I'm Not There*, 2007) and, Noah Baumbach (*The Squid and the Whale*, 2005). Yet more could be done to synchronize these interviews with the Museum's exhibits.

- *Moving Image Source:* The Museum's educational website devoted to the history of film, television, and digital media, includes articles addressing films whose scripts are housed at the Museum. A link between such articles and a catalogued record of the script will enhance the reader's research and understanding of the films.

- *Virtual Interactive Exhibit*: It is a challenge to display literary documents in an attractive and comprehensive way for the audience. A case in a gallery only allows for the showcase of one or two pages of a script without unbinding the artifact. Even with loose leaves, decisions related to the proper display of a written document should take into consideration its size and legibility. Given the nature of the Museum of the Moving Image, which deals with motion and new media among other elements, I found it appropriate to include an interactive, digitally-based exhibit that will allow the audience to have a closer look into the screenplay. Once created, the virtual exhibit could be a part of the gallery display through the section's monitor and included in the Museum's website at www.movingimage.us.

Closing Statement

The role of the screenwriter and the function of the script in the filmmaking process are indisputable. Yet the lack of public recognition and support maintain the profession in obscurity. The inclusion of an exhibit, educational activities, and film programming will not only shed light on this aspect of the industry, but will also generate attention among its members. Furthermore, since the topic is seldom discussed at the institutional level, this exhibit will reinforce the Museum of the Moving Image's unique and innovative spirit.

Appendix A: Catalogued Records

Script from the film *Network*, 1976

Accession number 1993.026.0025

Collection category Production

Artifact class Screenplays and related materials

Work type Scripts

Overall dimensions (in) 11.25 x 9.5 x 2

Components 147 p.

Creation date 1976

Material paper

Related entities Chayefsky, Paddy, wrote the object; Sidney Lumet (1924 -), owned the object

Related productions Network, is depicted by the object

Description

Director's copy of the script from the film *Network*, written by Paddy Chayefsky and directed by Sidney Lumet. The script includes handwritten notations and red crayon markings.

Historical note

Gaining recognition writing for anthology dramas during the Television Golden Era, but abandoning the medium disillusioned by the networks programming policies, Paddy Chayefsky applied the knowledge and experience of an insider and the perspective and critical views of an outsider to write *Network*. A real evening news anchor and his scripted incongruent speech triggered the initial outline for the script where an anchorman in his late fifties, Howard Beale, announces his on-camera suicide intensions, raising the show's ratings.

The character's rage and cynicism are reflections of Chayefsky's own discontent with the medium, "You couldn't write characters like that without being part of them," maintains Chayefsky's partner Howard Gottfried. "[Television] totally desensitizes [us to] viciousness, brutality, murder, death, so we no longer actively feel the pains of the victim or suffer for their lives or feel their grief. That is the basic problem of television. We lost our sense of shock, our sense of humanity," argued Paddy Chayefsky. Yet the author sees himself in characters Max Schumacher and Diane Christensen, whose relationship he describes as a "metaphorical love story... she represents television, he represents humanity; and it's the core of the picture."

Chayefsky pitched the story to United Artists and offered them the option for a first look at the script for 50,000. If they did not want it, he would have the right to take it elsewhere and keep the money. With the agreement in place, Chayefsky started a research process that involved watching hours of television and visits to NBC and CBS programming meetings. Only after UA's approval of the first draft, Chayefsky started polishing the jokes and speeches, which reflected his concerns at the time: American companies being bought by foreign –especially Arab-institutions.

Once finished, the script was sent to UA where it was reviewed by scripts developer Marcia Nasatir. "Very funny... very pertinent," she wrote in a memo, "however major problem for me is no hero... no hope." The memo praised Chayefsky's accurate description of the TV industry, but accused him of being too wordy and a "do-gooding humanist" incapable of writing a successful black comedy. United Artists assigned the task of discussing the main character with the author to the studios financial vice president. Chayefsky decided to pull the script. The next day, several studios called with offers and he settled with MGM, which at the time brought in a repented UA as co-producer.

In addition to his role as the film's screenwriter, Chayefsky acted as executive producer, "I love writing. Even more, I love hearing my own words up there on the screen. And if you want to do that, you'd just better be in charge," he confessed during an interview, "I am [in the set] every moment. I change lines on the spot. It's the only way."

Both director Sidney Lumet and producer Howard Gottfried agreed that Chayefsky was open to rewrites, "The script was all there. The problems were minor ... If your point made sense, there was no fighting," said Lumet. In total, only thirteen pages were rewritten and no lengthy speeches were cut.

The script caused contradictory reactions from actors considered for the part. Henry Fonda claimed a "personal distaste for the material" and James Stewart was "turned off" by it. William Holden was "overwhelmed by the honesty of the script," while Peter Finch, a British actor in semi-retirement, loved it so much that travelled from Jamaica to audition for the part.

"Theater dialogue. Film dialogue, I write the way people talk. In the theater there is just no audience for my work anymore. The intellectual elite are now all filmgoers. So what I am trying to do is theater writing in films," explained Chayefsky during an interview. The strength of the dialogue was clear during rehearsals. Despite Lumet's insistence on improvisation, the actors always came back to the original lines.

Paddy Chayefsky received an Academy Award for *Network* in the "Best Original Screenplay" category. The script also received the Golden Globe Award, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Award, the New York Film Critics Circle Award, and the Writers Guild of America Award.

In 2000, *Network* was published in *The Collected Works by Paddy Chayefsky: The Screenplays Volume 2* by Applause Books.

Historical note sources

Considine, Shaun. *Mad as Hell*. New York: Random House, 1994.

Mann, Roderick. "Movies." *Los Angeles Times*. May 30, 1976, p T32.

Russo, Vito. "Network." *Soho Weekly News*. December 13, 1976.

Taylor, Clarke. "Paddy May Have a Hit on His Hands." *Los Angeles Times*. November 21, 1976, p M1.

Script from the film *Taxi Driver*, 1975

Accession number 1989.040.0007

Collection category Production

Artifact class Screenplays and related materials

Work type Scripts

Overall dimensions (in) 11.5 x 9 x 1.25

Components 115 p.

Creation date 1975

Material paper

Related entities Paul Schrader, wrote the object

Related productions Taxi Driver, is depicted by the object

Description

Script Supervisor's copy of *Taxi Driver* script written by Paul Schrader. The script includes handwritten notations, time and continuity records, daily logs, continuity photographs, list of cast and crew, shooting schedule, actor's deals, and timing breakdown. The script is composed of six sets of revised colored pages (white, blue, yellow, green, pink and fuchsia) going from May 5, 1975 to June 13, 1975.

Historical note

Paul Schrader was 26 and destitute when he wrote *Taxi Driver*. The film came to him from his own period of isolation. "At the time I wrote it, I was in a rather low and bad place," Schrader recalls in an interview published in 2006... "I had broken with Pauline [Kael], I had broken with my wife, I had broken with the woman I left my wife for, I had broken with the American Film Institute, and I was in debt."

Schrader drifted around Los Angeles, living and sleeping in his car, obsessed with pornography, eating junk food, and drinking heavily until an ulcer took him to the hospital. "When I was talking to the nurse, I realized I hadn't spoken to anyone in weeks... that was when the metaphor of the taxi cab occurred to me. That is what I was: this person in an iron box, a coffin, floating round the city, but seemingly alone."

According to Amy Taubin, it was during Schrader's hospitalization that Arthur Bremer's attempt to assassinate Alabama Governor George Wallace made the headlines and part of his diary made it into the news, inspiring *Taxi Driver's* narrative. Robert Bresson's film *Pickpocket* (1959) also had an important role in the conception of the film, as well as literature classics such as Sartre's *Nausea* and Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*.

The script passed from the hands of director Brian de Palma, to producers Michael and Julia Phillips. Martin Scorsese was considered as a possible director, but only his success with *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and Robert De Niro's Academy Award for *The Godfather Part II* ensured Columbia's interest in the film.

The original version of the script had problematic racial tensions. In the final scene, Travis killed only black people "…it was just a racist slaughter." Producers had to intervene, claiming that such a display could instigate a riot. "It would have been socially and morally irresponsible if we had incited that kind of violence," Schrader recognizes.

Columbia Pictures knew that its main character would stir the interest of the media and decided to include Schrader's story in the press release to underline where the inspiration for the character came from. As a consequence, newspapers such as *Los Angeles Times* and *The Chicago Tribune* dedicated articles to the writer and his importance in the conception of the film, naming him the "hottest young scripter."

When asked about Scorsese's work on *Taxi Driver*, Schrader recognizes, "I wrote an austere film and it was directed in an expressionistic way. I think the two qualities work together. There is a tension in the film that is very interesting."

A version of *Taxi Driver's* script was published by Faber and Faber in 1990 and has been reprinted several times since then. The script is also included in Schrader's *Collected Screenplays: Volume 1*, published in 2002, and a novelization based on the film was written by Richard Elman.

Historical note sources

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Appendix B: List of Selected Scripts

Didactic Scripts

- Pages 2, 4, 5, 6 from *Troubled Times* script in which Art Director Howard Saulter drew sketches of some scenes in its border.
- Page 1 from *A Saint, A Woman, A Devil* script in which Director of Photography and Cinematographer Sol Negrin drew sketches, different camera angles and possible framings for the same scene.
- Page from *The Goodbye People* script in which the script supervisor attached photographs for continuity purposes.
- Art Director Gene Rudolf's copy of *The Hospital* script, in which a New York County Hospital Assistant made notations about the facility's specific layout and staff, prompting some changes in scene locations and the way in which staff is referred.
- Sound Engineer Jack C. Jacobsen's copy of *The Great Foodini* script in which sound effects are highlighted in red.
- Script Supervisor Martha Pinson's copy of *Dressed To Kill* script with its corresponding story board, both created by Brian de Palma.
- Actor Ben Lang's copy of *The Plot Against Harry* script where he rewrote and highlighted his lines.
- *The World According to Garp* script in which props and clothing are highlighted.
- Custom Designer/Art Director Tony Walton's copy of *The Chosen* script in which art direction issues are highlighted.
- Custom Designer/Art Director Tony Walton's copy of *The Glass Menagerie* script in which art direction issues are highlighted.

Network

- Cover from photocopied *Network* script in which the film's screenwriter Paddy Chayefsky signed his name for script supervisor Kay Chapin. The script includes a newspaper article mentioning the screenwriter.
- Page 76 from *Network* shooting script in which the film's director Sidney Lumet crossed the scenes with red crayon once they were done. This practice is common, since the scenes are not filmed in continuity. The page also contains handwritten notations made by the director.
- Page 76 from *Network* shooting script in which the film's script supervisor Kay Chapin marked scene divisions, changes in dialogue, and attached a photograph for continuity purposes.
- Page 76 from a photocopied version of *Network* script in which the film's script supervisor Kay Chapin marked early scene divisions and continuity issues.

Taxi Driver

- Sequence of eight framed pages from *Taxi Driver* shooting script in which the film's script supervisor Kay Chapin marked scene divisions, changes in dialogue, and attached a photograph for continuity purposes.

Other options include:

- Cover (1 annotated page)

- Character's bio (1 page)

- Scene 61-62 - Travis asks Betsy for coffee (5 colored pages with annotations)

- Scene 73-78 - Palantine gets into Travis' taxi (4 colored pages with annotations)

- Scene 189 - Travis and Iris have breakfast (7 colored pages with annotations)

- Scene 262 - Screenwriter's note about the final slaughter (1 page with annotations)