Victoria Swart

Proposal

This presentation analyzes the methods screenwriters use to develop a screenplay's location, time frame, and society – otherwise known as the story's "setting" – specifically regarding stories set in an international culture. In setting development, the writer finds that research is not only essential to the writing process but should be conducted in a different manner than research of other fields. An in-depth look at the processes of various screenwriters and screenwriting experts reveals that the internal story concept and external research interact with one another throughout the information collection and implementation stages. When considering a story's setting in the context of cross-cultural research, the writer must weigh how far he will go to develop an understanding of the culture, even as far as to travel to the country of study. This project analyzes this concept by conducting a practical experiment to travel internationally to two countries and build the setting of a feature-length screenplay based on the cultures experienced. The developed screenplay, though partly limited by time constraints and delving into the science fiction fantasy genre, nonetheless displays a deeper grounding in reality of cultural, geographical, and societal portrayal. Not only that, but the setting interacts with and affects the characters rather than remains static, which brings a reward of depth and unity to the many hours of research. Ultimately, the well-written screenplay sees an interweaving of setting with research and the subsequent interweaving of setting with character, action, and theme to create a cohesive story piece. To develop a cross-cultural setting rich in detail, viable to the storytelling, and believable to the audience, an advantageous screenplay research process involves accumulating internal and external detail and interweaving deliberate effectiveness to the plot and characters to eventually build a clear and engaging ambiance.