

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
FELICITY ABBOTT

SET DECORATOR
CLARE KEYTE
ZSUZSANNA SIPOS

SUPERVISING ART DIRECTOR
ALISTAIR KAY

THE INVITATION



Inspired by Bram Stoker's Dracula, THE INVITATION was set in New York and rural England, and filmed in Budapest, Hungary.

The visual language called for an elevated, contemporary Gothic style that foreshadowed impending terror and gave authenticity to the vampire lineage: collections of antiquities, tapestries, artifacts, designed to inspire and seduce the aspiring artist Evie. The design explores allegory through the dualities of upstairs and downstairs, fairytale and nightmare. The hunter and hunted. Beauty and decay.

We selected the Nádasdy mansion in rural Hungary as the exterior establisher. A rare example of Neo-Gothic Tudor in the Transdanubian landscape, it signified aristocracy and familial lineage. The majority of the interior of the New Carfax Abbey mansion was built in different stages in Budapest: The Grand Hall, formal bedrooms, library, dining room, ice-house and hallways.

Rich, textured interiors feature a saturated palette of secondary and tertiary tones with strong accents. While the architecture is authentically Gothic in detail and proportion, dramatic, contemporary light fixtures were fabricated to balance the historical elements: brass abstract bat wing sconces, blackened stag horn chandeliers and gold-dipped bird skulls sit among vaulted ceilings and overlaid tracery.

The set decoration, masterfully accomplished by Clare Keyte and Zsuzanna Sipos, centered around the themes of decadence, death, and decay: Art, ceramics, sculptures and weapons collected by the family over centuries adorned the walls and hallways centuries, elaborate trompe l'oeil scenery was painted in Evie's bedroom, painterly spring blooms and hidden predators. Grandiose botanical arrangements are featured throughout the sets, all made of dead and decaying stems.

New Carfax Abbey Grand Hall was the largest set and featured a monumental bronze statue of St George slaying the Dragon created as its centrepiece that sat among stone floors, decorative gothic mouldings and burnished bronze anaglypta wallpapers. A statue of a dissected gold figure (affectionately known as 'bling-man' by the art department), stood in a gothic niche at the top of the stairs.

The rehearsal dinner, or Vampire's banquet, was an elaborate affair filmed over many days. The menu was a veritable spectacle, a culinary exploration of the powers of horror: bird feet cake, blackened baby goat, putrid shrimp towers, rotting flesh adorned with fermenting fruit, all crafted into elaborate and alluring dishes. The black ceramic tableware was created by hand for the dinner scene and featured the Deville family crest embellished in gold.

The set architecture revealed the mechanics of the house through hidden passages, secret compartments and chambers. The subterranean chapel was inspired by bat wings and inverted gothic geometry. Its vaulted beams were treated in a smooth, highly polished, stone-like finish, as if carved directly from the rough, stone walls. A wine cellar, scullery, coffin room and butchery provided the interconnective tissue of the gloomy underground landscape to the elaborately decorative 'upstairs' sets.

THE INVITATION was realised by a dedicated collective of artists, sculptors, decorators and an art department team that worked tirelessly throughout a demanding 5-month schedule to bring this world to life.

Felicity Abbott APDG, BFDG, ADG | Production Designer

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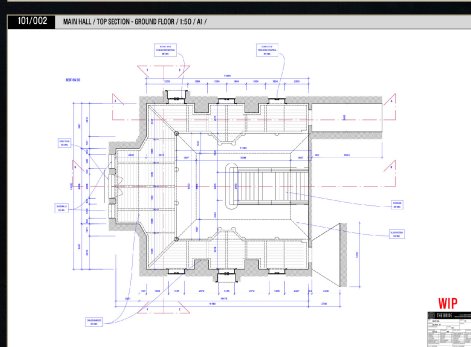
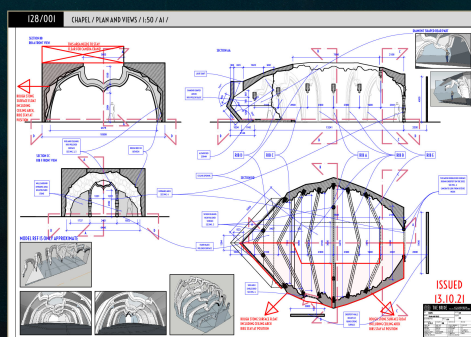
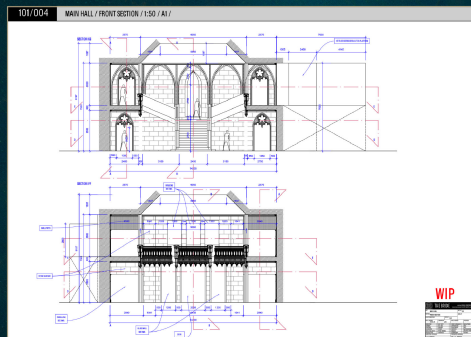
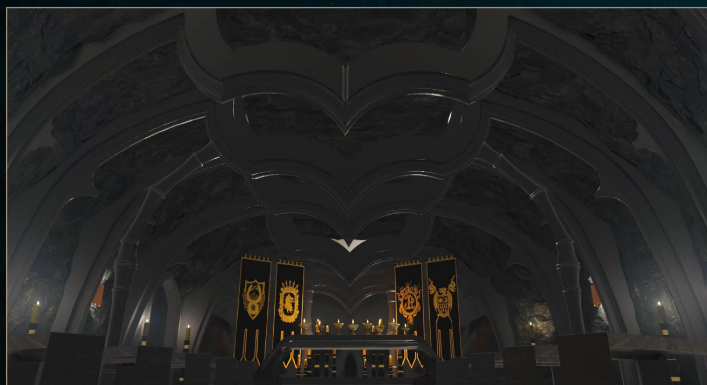
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