

To Kill A Mockingbird: Setting – Part 2

SETTING, PRODUCTION DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

SETTING (page 2 of 4)

"Although To Kill A Mockingbird is literally a story that presents a new South evolving out of the old, this metaphoric transformation in terms of race relations was something the entire mass audience understood in 1962. Despite Universal's initial hesitations about the movie, the picture proved to be a major critical and commercial success, and [Horton's Foote's](#) reputation as a screenwriter was established in Hollywood for the remainder of the decade." 2 (Additional note: according to the text Box Office Champs, TKAM was #8 of the top grossing films of 1963, earning \$7.5 million.)

ART DIRECTION/PRODUCTION DESIGN

"the art director must convince viewers that the world of the film is undeniably real ..." 3

"...it is the art director who stands between the screenplay and the director of the film, turning the printed page into a place real or fanciful, constructed or found, and who does so for a price the producer can live with."

"...if an art director is going his or her job well, we as spectators are not consciously admiring the 'look' as separate from the story unfolding and the characters involved." 4

 Henry Bumstead Co-Art Director <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i>	 Alexander Golitzen Co-Art Director <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i>	Storyboards – a major tool of the art director See original storyboards from the film and compare them to actual frames taken from the motion picture
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Setting involves time and location. The challenge for the Art Directors of *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Alexander Golitzen and Henry Bumstead, who won the Academy Award that year) was to create a setting that was not only authentic and believable but also realistic. The setting for the film is the Depression era South in the state of Alabama. The producers of the film traveled there but decided the cost of taking the production "on location" was too high. So, the question became, how to create the fictional Macomb, Alabama on a studio back lot in California?



A sketch (above) made by an assistant to Henry Bumstead.
(Source: Production Design and Art Direction: Screencraft
Publisher: Rotovision)
(see [more of this sketch](#))

"Art directors I think are one of the first people to get scripts, many times even before the director for *Mockingbird*. I went to Monroeville Alabama and I guess we rode for 3 or 4 hours and we took pictures. And I came home and designed the set all on the lot. We finished the film and I began getting calls from many different top art directors of MGM..and 'where did we shoot that picture', 'whereabouts in Alabama'? And I said 'we did it on the back lot', and they said come on Bobby you're kidding' and said 'no, it's all on the backlot'...and they said 'God that's a helluva job'...And so I guess I began to realize then maybe it was a very good job, so I guess it was because I won the Oscar that year for it..."⁵