



UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Emma Renhard

OUTPUT TITLE

Poltergeist

OUTPUT TYPE

Costume Design for Film

DATE

2017

01 / STATEMENT

FIG. 1
Poltergeist film poster, 2018.
Designed by Dan Clarke.



DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.7488/e170ab99-a13e-4900-9c8d-7cdf8fc2cc4c>

This practice based output consists of a body of costume designs created by Emma Renhard for the original British fiction feature film *Poltergeist* (2018).

Renhard's costumes created an original visual language for this film about gangsters, missing money and a physic medium. The costume design was produced on a budget of around £7K, within an overall production budget of £70K, and as such the research was also an experiment in how to produce high quality costumes within financial limits.

The film premiered as part of the British Independent Film Festival, Leicester Square London 2018. It has been selected for a number of independent film categories, including *Out of the Can* Festival and Toronto Indie Horror Festival.

02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS



FIG. 2
Poltergeist cast 2018. Character Alice (centre) played by Jo Mousley. Alice is a psychic medium who can communicate with the dead. At the beginning of the film she informs the police about the missing bodies of two children. She appears to be an unassuming, timid character, but has a darker side and sees an opportunity to take advantage of two hapless gangsters, when she manages to communicate with their dead boss, Frank. Image courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.

The output is a body of costumes produced by Renhard and commissioned in 2017 by Tadah Media, an award-winning international film agency, for the British feature film *Poltergeist*, directed by David Gilbank and produced by Tadah Films.

Renhard designed and collated 31 garments for the 15 core film characters, and additional costumes for approximately 100 extras.

The visual language of the film took inspiration from modern day Yorkshire. Renhard's intention was to create an accessible visual language to enable an empathetic response to the film's characters.

03 / ORIGINALITY



FIG. 3
Character Tariq, played by Sid Akbar Ali, is a small-time gangster who has an inflated sense of importance, as his uncle is a violent head of a gangster mob. He is a cocky individual who slowly descends into despair as his plans to return some stolen money fail. Image courtesy of Simon Walker.

The body of costume design was produced within micro-budget constraints.

The costumes were collated and adapted from existing garments that were bought, hired and borrowed by Renhard. The originality of the output lies first in the designs themselves, which constructed a unique hybrid style by blending high end suits and luxury fabrics that reference British gangster film classics, for example *Get Carter* (1971), with contemporary working class casual wear found in Northern England, where the film is set. For the minor characters, Renhard drew on recognised stereotypes to enhance the comic and surreal scenarios in which the main characters find themselves.

The costumes thus contributed to the film's playful re-invention of the heist-movie trope. Renhard's costume design establishes details of class, cultural background, status, political inclination, and the place of the character within the story.

Renhard's design methodology was responsive to the pressures of micro-budget filmmaking. The project is an exemplar of how low-budget unique costume design is possible, using resourceful, adaptive and flexible methods, without compromising aesthetic quality.



FIGS. 4-5
Character Janek (centre) is a Polish gangster with a number of extras playing members of the Polish gang. Renhard decided to use Hawaiian shirts to add a sense of comedy and unity. It was informed by her research into these shirts, which revealed that they have been worn by gangs such as the far-right group Boogaloo Bois. Janek's costume is more coordinated, which singles him out as the leader of the group. Image courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.



FIG. 6
Development drawing for the character Dawn, played by Stacey Coleman. Image Emma Renhard.



FINAL DESIGN

FIG. 7
Final drawing for the character Dawn, played by Stacey Coleman. Dawn is a hairdresser and the girlfriend of Boxy, one of the main characters in the film. She is concerned about her appearance and although we only meet her once in the film we get a sense that she is settled in her routine of friends and family and bears no loyalty to her boyfriend who she is cheating on. Image Emma Renhard.

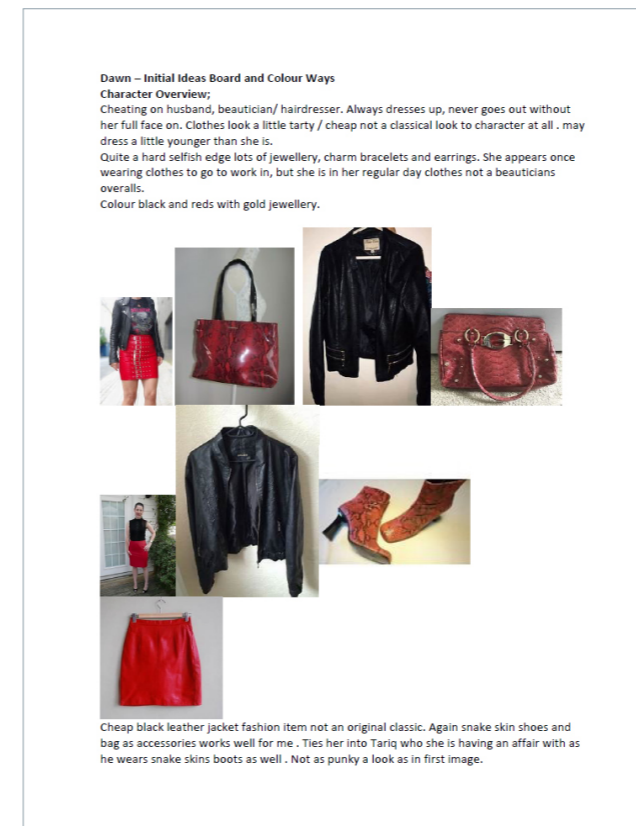


FIG. 8
Treatment board for Dawn, which allows the director to see the direction of costuming within a character before financial investment. The disposable fashions and the fake crocodile skin bag and shoes with lots of bling show a character with a limited amount of disposable income. The accents of red fulfil the director's request that all main characters have an element of red in their outfits, that also represents the character's attitude and fiery passion.

FIGS. 9-10
Dawn, played by Stacey Coleman. Images courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.

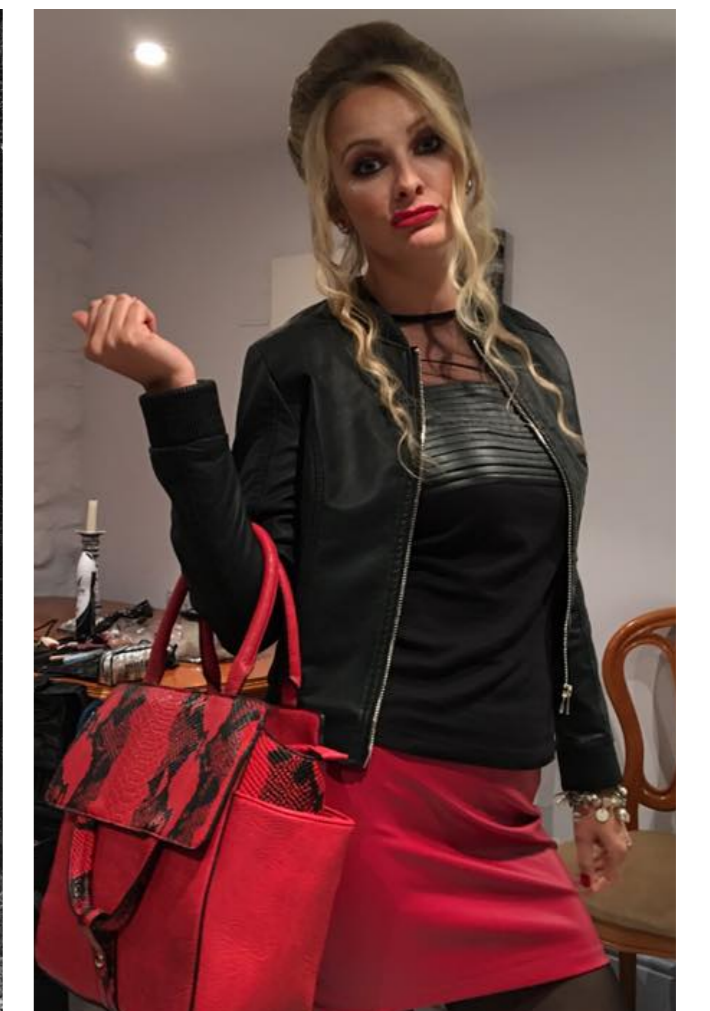




FIG. 11
Character drawing for Tracy, played by Gemma Head. Tracy is the wife of a murdered gangster who has money, but should appear tacky and tasteless. The animal prints in the costume reflect the room this scene was shot in. The room had a number of trophy animal heads on the wall. The director wanted the audience to know Tracy was wearing a wig, which we discover is due to cancer after she is shot and the wig becomes dislodged. Tracy is a down-to-earth, straight-talking character.



FIGS. 12-14
Character Tracy played by Gemma Head. Images courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.



FIG. 15
Character Hassan, played by Mandeep Shemi, is a key gang member and the main bodyguard to Uday, the head of a rival gangster mob. He should come across as intimidating and the muted red camouflaged jacket helps him remain in the background unnoticed until required. His thick, heavy, gold jewellery hints at money and self-worth and is in-keeping with his big stature.

FIG. 16
Character Boxy, played by Jamie Cymbal, is a small time gangster who works with Tariq. He is the uneducated brute force of the duo. He dresses for comfort and the double denim look of the jacket and jeans hints at a lack of style and self-awareness. He should look like a thug, but still have a vulnerable sense about him.

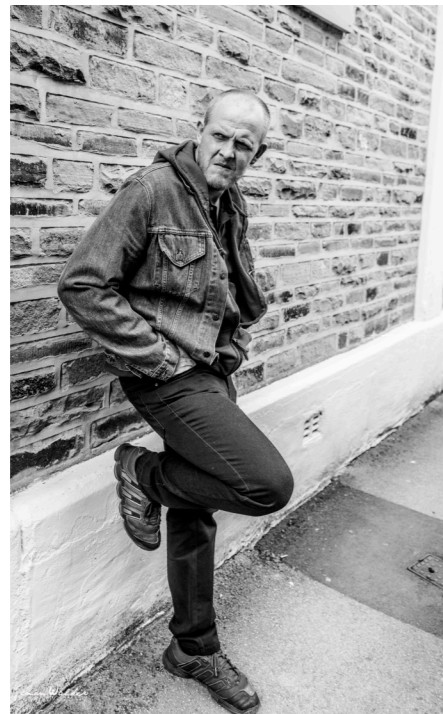


FIG. 17
(top right) Character Alice played by Jo Mousely Images courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.



FIGS. 18–20

Character Tariq, played by Sid Akbar Ali, and Boxy, played by Jamie Cymbal. As the recovery of the stolen money becomes more problematic the two characters relationship begins to erode. Images courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.



FIGS. 21–22

Character Uday, played by Pushpindar Chani, and a number of extras playing prostitutes. Uday is the main gangster in the film. He is a well dressed and groomed psychopath. Images courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.



FIG. 23
News Reporter, played by
Stephanie Hirst, on location with
Emma Renhard. Image courtesy
of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.



News Reporter:
Definitely dressed for colder weather in contrast to Alice who will look a little unprepared for a moorland interview.

Costume Elements
Padded coat/possibly large hood and fur trim – possibly red coat? Might add red scarf or red polo neck jumper instead and go for a neutral colour for the coat instead.
Trousers – grey wool
Hunter wellies (won't spend money on shoes if it's only head shots... let me know)
Gloves red /scarf



FIG. 24
Digital image board for News
Reporter, played by Stephanie
Hirst. Image Emma Renhard.

04 / RIGOUR

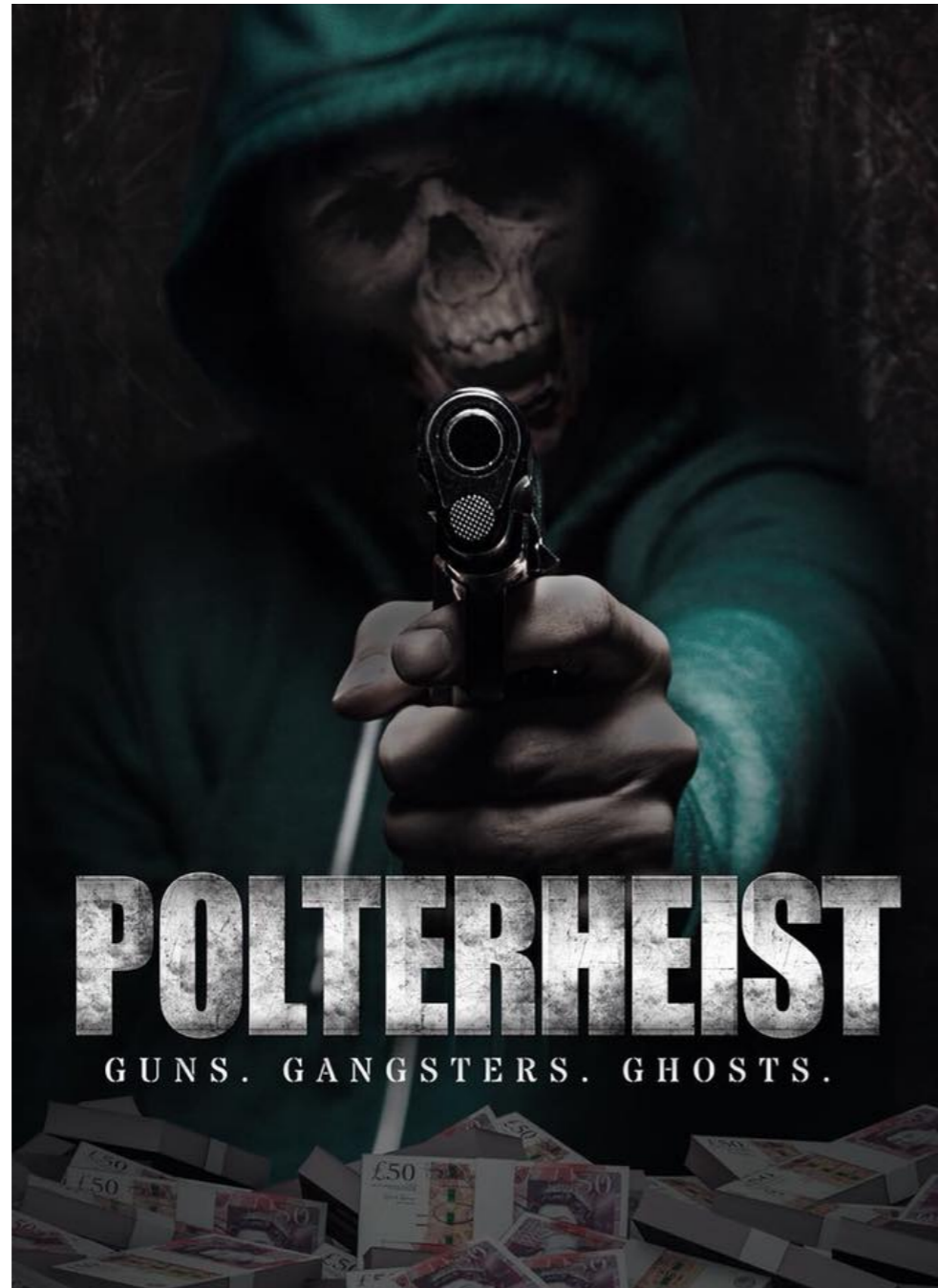
The production process began in January 2017 with Renhard's visual interpretation of the director's vision.

This was undertaken through script analysis, character drawings, and treatment boards, which determined how many costumes each character would need. Renhard created a digital image board (FIG 24) for each of the 15 main characters, collaging key images and attributing colour palette and clothing items to each of them.

Thirty-one costumes were sourced, bought or hired and altered by Renhard by hand, from second hand clothes shops, high street stores and costume hire departments.

Renhard's process develops traditional costume design methodology by producing a digital version of the costume bible. This was a 60-page digital library which contained all the information required to dress the actors. It was an innovative approach to the management of costume design within micro-budget film production, which operates within short timescales and low budget constraints.

FIG. 25
Poster designed by Dan Clarke.
A number of different designs
were used for marketing purposes.



05 / SIGNIFICANCE

The output has been widely disseminated through multiple screenings of the film, which was premiered as part of the British Independent Film Festival at Leicester Square, London 2018.

The film also had a selected run at Broadway Cinema, Bradford (2018) and has been seen by audiences totally in excess of 5,000 people. Additional Film Festival screenings include:

- Los Angeles Cine Fest, USA, 2018.
- Out of the Can Festival, UK, 2018.
- Midwest Horror Fest, Indiana, USA, 2018.
- Toronto Indie Horror Festival, Toronto, Canada, 2018.

The film has won awards including:

- Miraban UK Film Awards Winner Best UK Feature Film, November 2018.
- Satisfied Eye International Film Festival Best Feature Film, October 2018.

06 / APPENDIX



FIG. 27
Character DCI Wiles, played by Polly Lister, and Alice, played by Jo Mousely. Image courtesy of Simon Walker and Charles Leek.

FIG. 26
Official film trailer on YouTube, Screen grab.



FIG. 28
Poster designed by Dan Clarke. A number of different designs were used for marketing purposes.





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