



## Keynote Speech

### **ALEX McDOWELL\***

Production Designer

**Venue:** Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Room 127 Taşkışla İstanbul

**Date :** 7 April 2005

**Hour:** 16:30

### **'PROGRESSIVE FILM DESIGN'**

### **'TRADITION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY'**

Film production is a highly complex machine whose function is to create a single coherent object.

The production designer enables the singularity of the director's vision through control of the film space, regardless of whether it is a practical set or location; virtual set, miniature, or matte painting; or a prop in the hands of an actor.

Digital technology in the design department, combined with traditional practice and centralized in the design department, provide the filmmakers an unprecedented degree of control throughout the creation of a film. Not only with digital design tools, but also by networking the production, digital archiving, and a shared data stream.

\* **Alex McDowell**, Production Designer, (*The Crow*, *Fight Club*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Minority Report*, *The Terminal*, and *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*) integrates digital technologies with traditional design to create a unique process that allows unprecedented control over the look of a film. His centralized art department enables the strands of 2D and 3D concept and set design, locations, props, lighting and camera, visual effects and post production to be comprehensively linked in support of the director's vision and the visual consistency of the film.

For Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal*, McDowell created a full size airport terminal, the largest architectural interior ever built for film, and winner of the Best Production Design in a Contemporary Film award from the Art Directors Guild of America. In contrast, he also designed the miniature 'puppet scale' sets for the upcoming stop-motion animated feature *Tim Burton's The Corpse Bride*.

In 2004, McDowell completed the design for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, in which he re-teamed with Burton to bring to life Roald Dahl's classic story about eccentric chocolatier Willy Wonka. He has described the production as the most complicated and fascinating of his career, involving the design and build of an entire Town and Factory with the elaborate construction of the strange and psychedelic spaces envisioned by Burton for the Wonka factory - "Space age meets Russian constructivism meets James Bond through the lense of an Italian B movie in the timeless placeless world of Charlie Bucket".

In 2005, he is working with Director Anthony Minghella on "Breaking and Entering," an original drama written by Minghella and set in contemporary Kings Cross, London.

Born in Borneo, raised in England and residing in the United States, McDowell is a graduate in Fine Art from Central School in London. He began his career as a leading graphic designer for London's Punk music scene and segued into music videos. In a flowing series of sideway steps, he relocated to Los Angeles, CA and moved to production design for commercials and then film.

McDowell is founder and active member of Matter Art and Science, a network of designers, filmmakers, scientists and engineers.