

Scenic Artist

Scenic artists paint backdrops, murals and prop pieces for theatre, TV and film productions. They take the designs and ideas provided by a production or set designer and create the set pieces, which could be anything from a cityscape to a wall decorated in period style.

The Work

You could be:

- discussing the brief with a set or production designer
- analysing the technical drawings and model box (a scale model of the set) to work out how to create a full-scale reproduction
- researching the best materials to use to create a realistic scene, for example the type of surface
- calculating the cost of materials required and ordering supplies
- using a projector to transfer a design onto a larger surface as a guide for painting the scene or mural
- selecting paints, mixing colours and applying to surfaces using a range of paintbrushes and other tools such as a spray gun
- using techniques such as stencilling, marbling, woodgraining and texturing
- painting complex prop pieces and other three-dimensional pieces
- assisting with the installation and removal of the scene items.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Salaries for scenic artists may start at around £17,000 a year and with 1-2 years' experience this can rise to around £21,000 a year. With more experience, the salary can be higher. However, many scenic artists work freelance and charge an hourly or daily fee. This can depend on the type of work and their reputation.

The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) website publishes the latest rates from the Advertising Producer's Association (APA) Recommended Crew Rates (2023).

- Minimum Basic Day Rate: £491.00
- Maximum Basic Day Rate: £653.00
- Basic Hourly Rate: £65.00.

Conditions

- You could be based in a workshop or paint shop, working for a theatre or TV or film production company.
- Working hours vary and weekend and evening work may be necessary when meeting a deadline.

- Some of the materials you would use may give off unpleasant and dangerous fumes.
- You might have to wear protective clothing, such as a mask.
- You may have to work at heights.
- It is physical work and you will need to bend, stretch and use ladders for large scene pieces.
- Some travel may be involved, depending on the type of company you work for.
- If you are self-employed you would need to have your own equipment and transport.

Getting In

- Most scenic artists have studied a degree in an art discipline or containing art subjects.
- Relevant subjects include art and design, fine art, illustration, painting, stage design and production arts.
- Ideally, any qualification taken should have a large practical element.
- It helps to have a good knowledge of art history, architecture and different period styles.
- The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) offers a degree in Production Arts and Design, with specialisms in scenic art or set design.
- Entry is with 3 Highers, and a good portfolio of work.
- Competition for jobs is high so it can be useful to have some experience, for example through an amateur theatre group.
- A driving licence may be useful.

Applications for the RCS go through UCAS Conservatoires.

All applications to Art Schools (Duncan of Jordanstone at Dundee University, Edinburgh College of Art at Edinburgh University, Glasgow School of Art, Gray's School of Art at Robert Gordon's and Moray School of Art at UHI) are through UCAS. The closing date can vary depending on the course. Check with UCAS.

You can look for work with theatres and film or TV production companies, including those that produce TV commercials. Most film studios are based in London and south-east England, but there are theatres and TV companies based around the UK.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- a passion for art and design
- excellent drawing and painting skills
- experience of other art techniques
- imagination and creativity
- accuracy and an eye for detail
- good problem solving skills
- the ability to interpret designs and visualise ideas and turn them into reality
- good communication skills
- stamina.

You need to be:

- able to work on your own as well as in a team
- flexible and able to meet deadlines
- persistent and determined, for getting work
- good at networking and making contacts
- aware of health and safety regulations.

Training

- You would train and gain experience on the job with your employer.
- You would continue to develop your skills by attending relevant part time courses and training opportunities.

Getting On

- You may progress to scenic art manager or head.
- You may move into set design (see the [Set Designer](#) job profile), production design or stage management (see the [Stage Manager](#) job profile).
- You may become self-employed, working on a freelance basis.

More Information

There are a number of websites advertising jobs in the theatre, film and TV industries, such as [The Stage](#) and [Mandy](#).

For more information on creative careers see [here](#)

Contacts

Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT)

Tel: 07443 380076

Email: admin@abtt.org.uk

Website: www.abtt.org.uk

X: [@theabtt](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheABTT

BECTU Scotland (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union)

Tel: 0141 370 1590

Email: info@bectu.org.uk

Website: www.bectu.org.uk

Website (2): careersmart.org.uk

X: [@bectu](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BECTUOfficial

Discover Creative Careers Finder

Website: discovercreative.careers/#

X: [@CreativeCareer5](#)

Stage Management Association (SMA)

Email: admin@stagemanagementassociation.co.uk

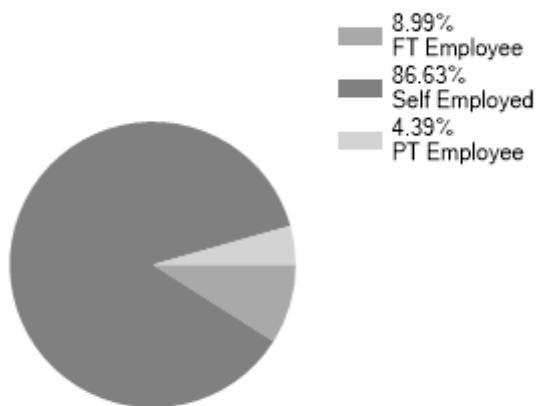
Website: www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk

X: [@SMAAssoc](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/smassoc#

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

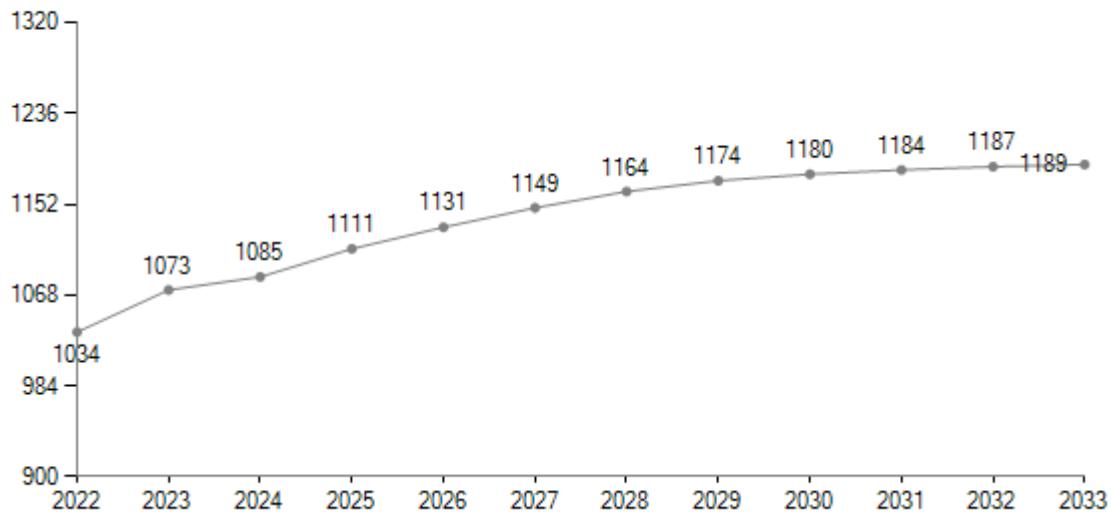


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)