

# **Cardinal Sins Through Set Design**

## **The Seven Deadly Sins**

### **and its Portrayal in The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover**

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## **Abstract**

From the early Christian Church to contemporary cinema, the cardinal sins have been a popular theme in art and literature. While some films use the sins merely for entertainment value, others use them to convey powerful messages about human nature and society. The latter type includes *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989), using the sins to strengthen its political criticism.

Set design is a crucial component of the film that adds depth and purpose to the story. Director Peter Greenaway and set designers Ben van Os and Jan Roelfs create a baroque ambiance that appeals to the subconscious and enhances the overall tone of the movie. They have done so by drawing inspiration from art history and painting principles. Props, composition, color, and texture all contribute to create a consistent visual style that conveys the film's message.

The deliberate emphasis on immorality and sin in the film serves as a passionate commentary on the political state of the United Kingdom in the 1980s, and the set design plays a crucial role in conveying this message visually.

## **Keywords**

cardinal sins, set design, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, Peter Greenaway, Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs

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## Introduction

“My cinema is deliberately artificial, and it’s always self-reflexive. Every time you watch a Greenaway movie, you know you are definitely and absolutely only watching a movie. It’s not a slice of life, not a window on the world. It’s by no means an exemplum of anything ‘natural’ or ‘real’. I do not even think that naturalism or realism is even valid in the cinema.”

- Peter Greenaway in an interview with Gavin Smith in 1990  
(retrieved from Gras & Grass, 2000)

*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (further referred to as *The Cook*) is a crime drama art film written and directed by the English Peter Greenaway (1989). The film revolves around the wife, Georgina, of the crime boss Albert Spica, who engages in a secret love affair with the kind bookseller Michael between meals at her husband’s restaurant, Le Hollandais. With the help of the chef of the restaurant, Richard, they succeed in keeping their affair hidden for a while. When Albert discovers their betrayal, he kills Michael. Georgina proceeds to take revenge on her husband with the help of the cook and the other victims of Albert.

As Greenaway previously worked together with Dutch production designer Ben van Os and his companion Jan Roelfs, it came as no surprise that they were also involved in the production of *The Cook*. Their collaboration turned out to be a good match, as they managed to enhance each other’s work, with mutual respect. For *The Cook*, this collaboration is expressed in lively and intricate sets filled with strong colors and symbolic imagery.

These sets portray the various themes Greenaway intended to show and has mostly relied on colors to do so: “I was looking for a universal system, like the alphabet or the decimal count, and decided to use the seven colors of the spectrum to organize and structure the material of the movie.” (Greenaway in Gras & Grass, 2000, p. 76). He does, however, admit, that he had to make a concession and eliminate the use of indigo and violet, as they were too subtle to his taste to build a set with it. By relying on a system though, he gives the movie a strong visual structure. Next, inspired by his love for painting and drama, he continues to hide religious references within the movie. He has even asked his interviewer Smith (1990) whether he was able to spot any religious allusions he had included in *The Cook*. In previous interviews, he had already explained comparisons he derived from Dante and the Old Testament<sup>1</sup>, but leaves room for further religious references to uncover by just scraping the surfaces in his interviews<sup>2</sup>.

As Greenaway already mentioned his interest in universal systems and plays with religious themes in his film, it could mean that there is more to the surface than he lets on. As the film portrays

<sup>1</sup> When the shocking introduction scene wherein a man is forced to eat shit comes up in the interview, Greenaway interrupts: “...and not just shit, but dog shit, which if you read Dante and the Old Testament is one of the deepest humiliations possible for humans.” (Greenaway in an interview with Kilb in 1989: Gras & Grass (2000), p. 61)

<sup>2</sup> Even prior to starting *The Cook*, Greenaway worked on a television series for Channel Four based on Dante’s *Inferno* (Kilb: Gras & Grass, 2000, p.60). Although he doesn’t confirm this himself, it is safe to say that whilst studying Dante he has incorporated several themes into *The Cook* as well.

themes like sex, death, and violence, the cardinal sins are portrayed via these themes as well. Cardinal sins, also known as the seven deadly sins, is a religious concept widely used in but not restricted to cinema. Concerning the intriguing set design of Roelfs and van Os, this thesis will answer how set design aids the portrayal of the cardinal sins in *The Cook*. The main themes to be investigated will be these sins, set design, and *The Cook* itself, wherein these themes will come together.

Several studies have already been conducted on the film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. Most of the time, they cover specific themes in general and focus on all the used means to convey certain messages. There hasn't been a study conducted specifically on the portrayal of the cardinal sins in set design, but studies have been found specifically on cardinal sins and set design. As part of conducting research, archival research will be required to gather primary sources. In this archival research, the archives of Kunstmuseum Den Haag (formerly known as Gemeentemuseum Den Haag), Beeld & Geluid Hilversum, and EYE Filmmuseum were consulted to gather various sources: such as newspapers, interviews (both written as audiovisual), reviews and photographs. Within this archival research, literature research and iconographic research will also be conducted to review the sources. The research method will go beyond archival research by consulting books, articles, and films related to set design, cardinal sins, and *The Cook*.

A history thesis on specifically the use of set design to aid the portrayal of the cardinal sins, however, will reveal exactly how set design can be implemented to portray these sins effectively. This holds a strong relation to the connotations we have with certain colors and objects, which are in close relation to historical appearances and usage. The thesis will therefore offer a better understanding of set design in *The Cook*. Also, with the help of the conducted research, this thesis will be a helpful guide to notice elements of set design in other films to understand the deeper meaning behind this world.

To answer the main research question, the cardinal sins will be investigated first, to understand what they exactly entail and how they have been portrayed prior to *The Cook* in cinema. Then, these cardinal sins will be examined in the film and how set design plays a part in its portrayal. To do so, set design itself must be fully understood to see which means have been used to convey certain artistic messages and choices. After, the critical reception of *The Cook* will be reviewed to determine whether the film has had any significant influence on other films in terms of portraying the cardinal sins.

# 1 The Seven Deadly Sins and Their Appearance in Cinematic History

The seven deadly sins, also known as cardinal or capital sins<sup>3</sup>, refer to the following seven sins: pride, greed, envy, lust, gluttony, wrath, and sloth (Doverspike, 2021, p.1). These sins are especially related to Western Christian traditions where they got classified, but they have Hellenistic astrological origins where they had ties with (the then discovered) seven planets. Bloomfield's hypothesis (1941, p.121) states that fourth-century Egyptian Christian ascetics copied a list of seven or eight sins from pagan religions and stripped them of their 'unorthodox associations'. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great listed the cardinal sins as we know them. Each sin has an opposite, known as the seven virtues (humility, kindness, diligence, patience, temperance, abstinence, and chastity). Originally, they were not intended to be used as a guidebook to determine who should be punished as they were used much later in the seventh and eighth centuries for penitential classification. Even later, they were used in confessionals for questioning as well. As a result, the cardinal sins were considered deadly in the later Middle Ages and played a big role in the Catholic Church from then on (Bloomfield, 1941, p.127). As the cardinal sins embody great themes, it is not quite shocking that their presence occupies a big space in art, related and unrelated to the Church.

A notable literary appearance of the sins can be found in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1321), wherein the sins represent corrupt versions of love. In this poem, the author meets the sinners in the Inferno, where they are each punished for one of the seven deadly sins they were most guilty of in their lives. To continue this line of thought, *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer (c. 1400) uses the Deadly Sins as an organic motif as well (Lowes, 1915, p. 241). The abundant use of these sins in this work is because it dealt greatly with life, which is full of vices and virtues. As Chaucer lived in an age where theology was dominant, he refers to the sins explicitly by name as well as vivid descriptions and follows other authors of the Middle Ages like Dante. An example can be read in the general prologue of *The Tales*, wherein the knight is described modestly as:

*“And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.  
He nevere yet no vileyne ne sayde  
In al his lyf unto no maner wight.  
He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.”* (69-71)

<sup>3</sup>They are called 'deadly' as they would lead to the death of the soul. Cardinal is derived from the Latin *cardinalis* (essential) or from the genitive of *cardinis*, *cardo* (that on which something turns or depends). Hence, these sins are the main sins on which other sins depend on. Capital sins is derived from the Latin *caput* (head), because the sins stem from the mind. (Doverspike, 2021, p.1)

With his clothing modest, wearing just a tunic of coarse cloth and he just came back from a pilgrimage. To juxtapose the Knight, Chaucer continues to describe the Knight's son Squire as a proud man:

*“Embrouded was he, as it were a meede,  
Al ful of freshe floures, whyte and reede.  
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;  
He was as fressh as is the month of May.”* (89-92)

This is a commentary on the sin of pride, as the Squire is painted off as a proud, vain man, with no stains on his armor, in contrast to the Knight.

Literary works that treated these subjects teach us correct morals to serve and worship God. To dwell in sin, would mean that one would stray from God's path and would neglect their duties towards God. Although the Bible doesn't classify the cardinal sins specifically, it does mention them. Especially pride and greed are singled out, as read in Ecclesiasticus 13:

*“For pride is the beginning of sin, and he that hath it shall pour out abomination:  
and therefore the Lord brought upon them strange calamities, and overthrew them utterly.”*

And in 1 Timothy 10:

*“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.  
By craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”*

Interestingly enough, the Bible doesn't state which of the sins is the worst of them all. European thinkers, on the other hand, believed that greed was the worst of all during the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. This was due to the Commercial Revolution in Europe when the European society experienced a power shift and this became liquid. Before, pride was considered to be the worst sin during the feudal and hierarchic age (Little, 1971, p. 16). Hence, by taking the socio-economic context into account, one can explain the perception of the deadly sins.

As most people were not literate in the medieval ages, art was a clear way to convey Biblical messages to the people. A primary example of an art piece wherein a moral instruction lies, is the *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* by Hieronymus Bosch (1510).





Figure 1  
*Table of the Seven Deadly Sins (Bosch, 1510)*

As seen in figure 1, the vices are arranged radially, like spokes in a wheel, out of a central point wherein we see Christ in the middle of the text “cave, cave, dūs videt” (beware, beware, God sees) is visible. As his wounds are clearly visible, this painting strongly suggests that we are all under God’s eye and that our sins could assure a final verdict in the Last Judgment (Silver, 2001, p. 628). Bosch makes these sins explicit in both imagery and text, divided by the spokes. The four round elements in the corner represent the “Four Last Things”: death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. The artist follows the medieval tradition of *ars moriendi* in the top left element showing death, wherein an angel and devil contest over the fate of the dying man. To compare this work of Bosch with another Christian piece, one might think of the iconic *Garden of Earthly Delights* Triptych.



Figure 2  
*The Garden of Earthly Delights (Bosch, 1500)*



Even though both works depict scenes related to the cardinal sins, there are differences between the two. Whereas *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* specifically shows the seven sins, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* shows other themes (from left to right: the idyllic garden, the creation of the world, and hell). While the central panel shows different forms of pleasure and sin, it is not organized around the sins specifically. Here, the diverse forms of indulgence are more diffuse and open-ended. The exterior shutters of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* show us God with a bible, this is a reminder of how He is watching us while we commit our sins – just like how this is the main message of *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins*. As Silver (2001, p. 645) argues, that “*only by remembering that one is in the perpetual view of God and by remaining righteous, which one can do by turning one’s eye—the inner eye of faith, not corrupted or tempted by the eye of worldly engagement upward to God himself. In this case, the viewer must go outside the very framework of a conventional, but misleading triptych interior. Only by leaving the garden can the viewer truly hope to exercise correct judgments and avoid the pitfalls that lead to the fires of Hell.*”



Figure 3  
The exterior of the shutters of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, with God seen in the upper left corner (Bosch, 1500)

Although the portrayal of the seven deadly sins is not limited to medieval works, there are still significant differences in the way they are depicted. While Bosch shows the sins in explicit and implicit ways through his paintings, the portrayal of these sins can take on various forms in contemporary media. The theme of the cardinal sins stays relevant, not only for religious reasons but also because we have come to see these vices as virtues in modern society as well (Frank, 2001, p.98). Pride, for example,

has been made necessary to survive. From taking pride in our sexuality, or simply being proud of our accomplishments to grow in our careers. Modern media shows us that we can thrive through the moderation of these sins, and are not necessarily punished for this. In the animated film adaptation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) for example, the seven dwarfs each represent one of the sins. They stick together, which results in them not committing any sinful acts. This results in a mild depiction of the cardinal sins, mainly since the film is for child entertainment purposes. The works of Bosch, Dante, and Chaucer on the other hand, depict the sins in graphic and explicit ways to shock the audience. Bosch for instance, emphasizes the consequences of indulging in sin. In contrast, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* has a more hopeful tone by portraying the possibility of overcoming sin through collaboration and moderation. This suggests that people can resist temptation after all, without having to evoke fear in the audience. Therefore, how these sins are portrayed in contemporary media can vary a lot. Not only in the forms they take on but also in the messages they convey.

Moreover, the portrayal of the cardinal sins is also reflected in the set design of contemporary media. For instance, the use of colors, props, and symbols can subtly represent the seven sins. Through these methods, filmmakers create a visual language that speaks to the subconscious and enhances the tone of the story. To analyze films prior to *The Cook*, a brief analysis of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) will be conducted. This will provide insight into the theme of the seven deadly sins in film and the usage of set design to portray this.

*Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) is a film adaptation of the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl (1964). It tells the story of the poor child Charlie Bucket, who wins a Golden Ticket to visit Willy Wonka's chocolate factory along with four other children. These other children all display strong characteristics of the deadly sins which, ultimately, lead to their demise. Examples of this are the overeater Augustus Gloop, who falls into the chocolate river because he could not stop drinking the water, as a sign of his gluttony. Or the spoiled Veruca Salt, who embodies greed, as she throws tantrums just to get what she wants. When Willy Wonka refuses to sell her a squirrel, she tries to take one herself and this leads to her downfall into the garbage chute.

The film's set was designed by Harper Goff, who took notion of Dahl's book but had to come up with his own infill to give it more body in the film (Kent, 2011). The movie was shot in the Bavaria Film Studios in Munich, and they had to design the enormous



set which included the chocolate riverbed and waterfall (Jones, 2016). Similarly, food plays an important part throughout the whole film in *The Cook* as well. Whereas sins like lust, wrath, and envy dominate in *The Cook*, both films deal with a lavish display of gluttony which is mainly expressed via the display of food. In *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, this primarily comes to life by the over-dimensioning of the food as part of the set design, and by the accentuation of its vivid, lively colors, as seen in figure 4.



Figure 4  
Photo of the chocolate river in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, surrounded by over-dimensioned food (Stuart, 1971)

Furthermore, Goff has explained that the design of the Inventing Room<sup>4</sup> extended beyond the original description of the book, to emphasize the visual experience of Violet Beauregarde's gluttonous theft out of greed (Kent, 2011). Not only does the Inventing Room emphasize these sins, but this technique has also been applied to the other rooms of the Factory where the children face their punishments (figure 5).

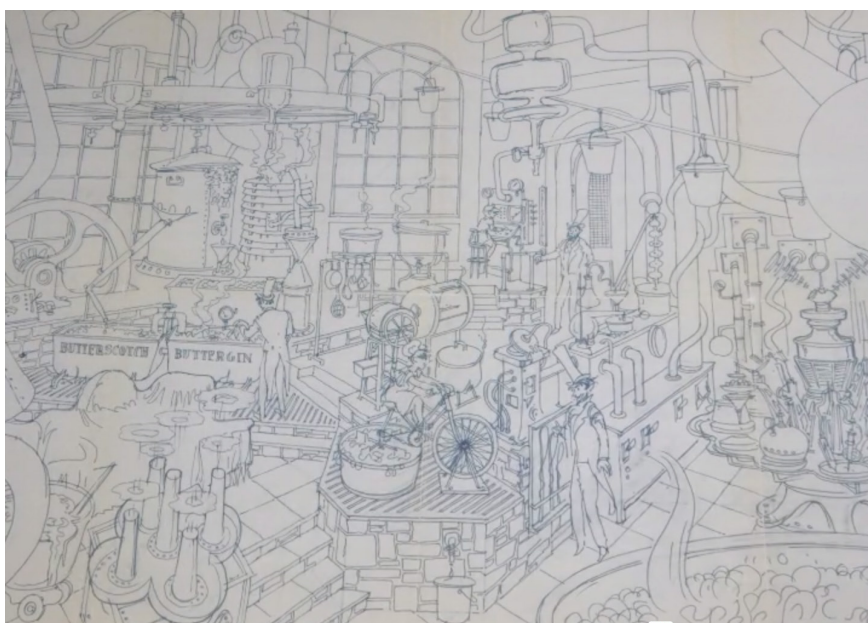


Figure 5  
Drawing of the Inventing Room by Goff. Screenshot from the short film *Willy Wonka 40 Years & Harper Goff* (Kent, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> The Inventing Room is the room wherein Wonka keeps his secrets and where he invents his candies (Dahl, 1964).

Another film of the same year is *A Clockwork Orange*. This is a film adaptation of the 1962 novel by Anthony Burgess, directed by Stanley Kubrick. The main character of the film is Alex DeLarge. He portrays all the cardinal sins as he engages in acts of violence, which shows that he has no sense of morality. The concept of sin is used to explore whether people can decide their actions, or if these are determined by other factors. Later in the film, we see how Alex undergoes a conditioning procedure whereafter he is physically unable to do anything violent. The film's set design plays in on this, by creating a dark and unsettling atmosphere. Lighting played a big role in this, differently in the three parts of the film: the violent beginning, Alex's imprisonment and treatment, and the time after his release. The first part uses bright colors and lots of light, the second part is quite dark and has a cool color palette, and the last part mimics the first, but with flatter shots to mimic Alex's docile character (The Take, 2020). Props are used to strengthen this as well, as we see brightly colored objects and furniture. Other props are even more suggestive, to set the tone even faster and more apparent.

In figure 6, we see how the female sculptures are submissively used by the visitors of the Korova Milk Bar. These sculptures are inspired by the work of Allen Jones and were created by Liz Moore. (Benson, 2022). Portraying women as furniture is objectifying, and accentuates the disregard Alex and his gang has for women and people in general. Other than that, it also evokes a sense of lust through the sexualization of the female body. This is strengthened through the use of the sculptures as well: as they sit on them, get their drinks from the breasts, and use the bodies as tables.



Figure 6  
Still of the Korova Milk Bar (Kubrick, 1971,  
00:02:09)

Lust is a frequently used theme in the film as well, as Alex and his gang rape women (with the old in-out, as he calls it) and sexualizes them. This can also be seen in figure 7. Here we see a still of Alex's bedroom, with a poster of a woman lying naked on her back with her legs open. We see a branch on the wall for his pet snake, positioned in such a way that it penetrates the woman. Under the poster, we see four dancing sculptures of Jesus Christ. This meticulous placement forms a biblical scene referring to the Garden of Eden wherein Eve is seduced by the snake, causing her to sin. It reminds us of medieval portrayals of the downfall of humankind, as seen in Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, but gives it a modern, satirical twist.



Figure 7  
 Still of Alex's bedroom  
 (Kubrick, 1971, 00:17:18)

These brief analyses of *Willy Wonka* and *A Clockwork Orange* show us various ways of the portrayal of the cardinal sins through set design in contemporary media. *Willy Wonka* shows us the consequences of indulging in sin and strong disapproval of doing so. The film shows this mostly through the characters themselves, without changing the surrounding too much to enhance this. *A Clockwork Orange* on the other hand goes deeper into the intricacies of sin. Unlike *Willy Wonka*, it doesn't just deem sin as plain evil and worthy of punishment, but it also shows us how free will plays a role in our actions and choices. Also, by deliberately designing the set in a suggestive manner, the set strengthens the actions in the film. This difference between the films can be explained by the purpose of the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Dahl, which was aimed at children and functions as a moral lesson. Burgess, on the other hand, wanted to explore the theme of free will versus determinism more and let that play a bigger role in *A Clockwork Orange* than sin itself (Rabinovitz, 1979, p.539). The reception of portraying cardinal sins in movies is debatable, however, as some argue that it leads to corruption. Rice's book *What is Wrong with the Movies?* (1938) claims that the "movie is the rival of schools and churches, the feeder of lust, the perverter of morals, the tool of greed, the school of crime, the betrayer of innocence". Rice further exclaims how "the movie glorifies impurity as love. It pictures murder as entertainment. It exalts nakedness and



*indecent as beauty. It shows drink, divorce, reveling, gambling, revenge, gun fights as proper and legitimate...".* On the other hand, the appearance of the so-called sinful films could be used for didactic purposes. Australian Jesuit Peter Malone (2005) believes that film can act as both a moral and spiritual compass. In this same line of thought, Schillaci (1968) believes that "*motion pictures, rather than being an object of fear and suspicion as far as morals are concerned, are in fact a vital source of emotional maturity and sensitivity*".

Either way, it seems to appear that the seven deadly sins wake the interest of its audience: whether this is negative or not. *How* they are displayed is another question, as this differs per purpose. Which means are used to do so, is insightful to learn how set design can effectively be used.

## 2 The Cardinal Sins in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*

Following in the same footsteps of artists like Bosch, Chaucer, and Kubrick, Greenaway explores the darker aspects of human nature in *The Cook*. *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* is a film that explores sin, punishment, and morality. As the medium allows it, *The Cook* can do this more profoundly than paintings or literature. Or as Greenaway calls it: “*the sophisticated medium we call film. It is such a rich, complex medium wherein you can put whatever you want. That’s why I hate cinema that underestimates itself and tells stories too straightforward to toddler-audience. Cinema that doesn’t use the stunning staggeringly revealing and extensive vocabulary*” (Linthorst, 1989). Set in the classy Le Hollandais, we see how the different characters embody the cardinal sins and how the set design is carefully constructed to strengthen this portrayal. Soaked in symbolism and contrasting colors, the film explores the seven deadly sins through the examination of human behavior.

Before becoming a film director, Greenaway was a trained artist and painter. His fascination for drawing and painting has never left him and significantly impacted his cinematic work as well. In the intimate documentary *Het Greenaway Alfabet* (2018) directed by his wife Saskia Boddeke, he discusses the art of drawing with their daughter, Zoë.

*“It’s said when you make a good drawing, a good painting, you’re sure to remember four things. Do you remember what they were?”*

*“Color, line... perspective?”*

*“No, mass. And texture. Mass, that indicates the big areas of substance. Which has mainly got to do with the composition of the painting.”*

As Greenaway draws inspiration from drawing and painting, these four aspects can be seen in *The Cook*. These are related to ways we can interpret film space as well, in relation to set design. Following film director Eric Rohmer’s delineation of space, he makes three distinctions: the architectural, the pictorial, and the filmic (Aroztegui Massera, 2010, p.6). The architectural space is the physical location where the film is shot, referred to in this paper as mass. The pictorial space is related “*to the film image in terms of its similarities with painting, compositionality, chromaticity...*”. This is closely related to color and texture. Filmic space includes both the audio and the off-screen space, in a way the space within the film as opposed to the space in the real world. This paper interprets *line* as a good way to show this, how the sequencing of the sets has been designed, and how this is related to the axes in the film. Thus, these topics will be explored in the paper through the analysis of its set design.

Firstly, the architectural space: mass. In a 1989 interview with the Dutch tv-program Atlantis, Jan Roelfs tells how the set is constructed with prefabricated elements made in the Netherlands. Nearly everything is made out of triplex and wood, to make it as light as possible. Roelfs has stated, however, that the set became quite big, and didn't seem to look like décor anymore because they had to make 'real' constructions. Quite in line with van Os: "Film is een verheving van de werkelijkheid. Je kan sferen maken die je normaal in het leven niet realiseert." (Limburg, 2005). The whole set had to be ready at the same time, as continuous shots through the different places had to be made. Initially, van Os and Roelfs wanted everything to be in one longitudinal line, but that wasn't possible as there wasn't enough room for it. Nearly the whole set was built inside the Stage 6 studio of Cannon, with dimensions as big as 70m long, 30m wide, and 8m high. The carpark is the only exception, which is built outside next to the studio (Ippel, 1989, p.47).

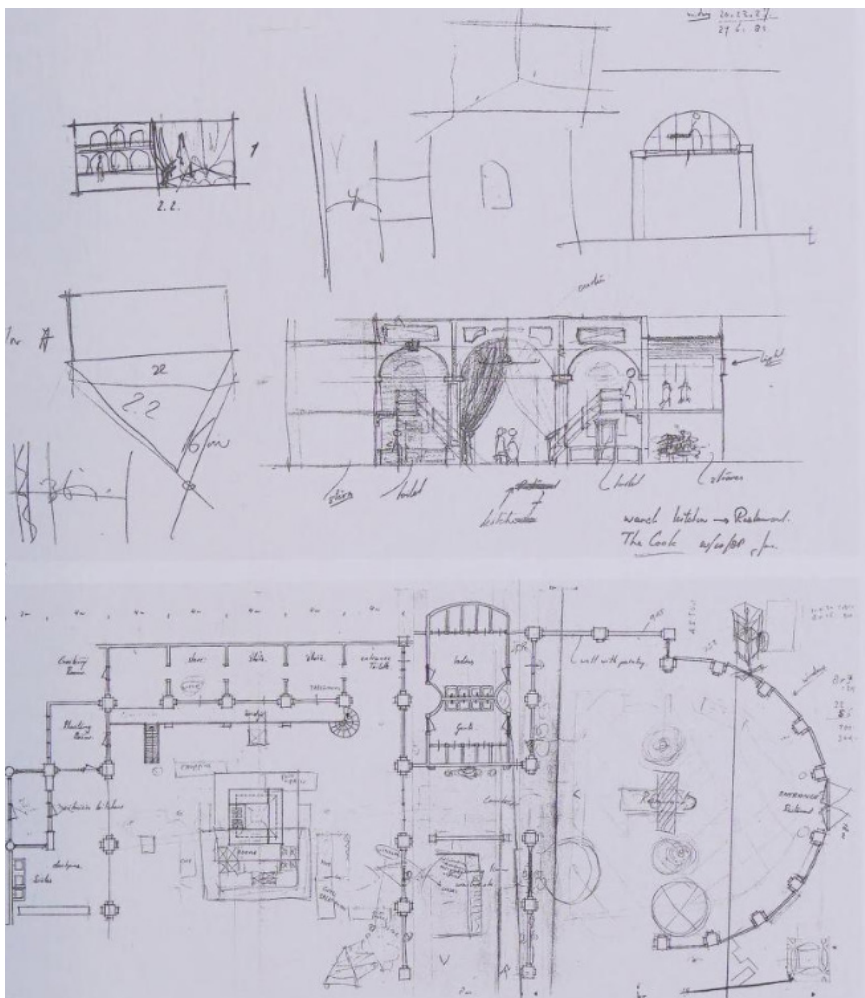


Figure 8  
 Rough sketch for kitchen and restaurant and floor plan showing the four main areas of the set: exterior, kitchen, restaurant, and toilet. (Ettedgui, 1999, p.156)

"De hele set, dat bestaat uit een restaurant en keuken, was opgebouwd uit kolommen en bogen. En die kolommen en bogen, hadden we als een soort kathedraal" (Roelfs, in Atlantis 26-11-1989, 00:03:02).



Figure 9  
 Still from the Atlantis interview on the set of *The Cook*, showing the columns described by Roelfs. (VPRO, 1989, 00:01:04)



Figure 10  
 Still from *Atlantis*, showing the empty set from above. The upper structure used for lighting can be seen. (VPRO, 1989, 00:05:32)

Designed in a baroque way, Greenaway sheds a light on this decision: “Ben is fascinated by the baroque, you know which means: excessive use of detail, very ornate sets with many, many things in them, but I’m sure his interests are very Catholic, very wide.” (Greenaway, in *Atlantis* 26-11-1989, 00:07:45). Keeping this elaboration in mind, the biblical connotation of the set design makes sense when we see the film unravel. It is in this cathedral, that we see the Wife and the Cook “prepare a feast, a Last Supper, which takes its meaning from an allegory of enforced cannibalism” (Elliott & Greenaway, 1997, p.63). The same ‘cathedral’ forms the perfect backdrop of Psalm 51, sung by an angel-like kitchen worker who is forced to eat his own belly button. And aren’t angels the mythical creatures who don’t own one? These two biblical intertexts can be seen in *The Cook*, and they take on a character of their own. In addition, they can be seen contributing to the plot in their own unholy way (Black, 2006, pp.110-111). But the Biblical intertexts don’t end



there. We see how the wife and her lover are forced to descend into Hell through a truck full of rotten meat, after which they are washed clean by a woman named Eden. The book archive can be seen as the Tree of Knowledge, responsible for the evil on Earth. It is here where the lovers are prepared for the greatest sacrifice, in this case in the offering of Michael. It is here where we can draw a parallel to Jesus Christ, who said before he died: “*Take, eat; this is My Body.*” (Matthew 26).

The sets are based on Greenaway’s script. On one hand, these scripts were very detailed, but on the other hand, Greenaway left certain decisions open for Roelfs and van Os to fill in (Kroese, 1989). After discussing the script, they would proceed to collect materials on possible outcomes and references. These references were largely paintings, which is quite in line with Greenaway’s love for art. The Dutch golden age specifically speaks most to him of its appeal on allegorical and literal levels. “*I would like my movies to work the way Dutch painting did, on literal and metaphorical levels.*” Examples of popular paintings during the Dutch golden age, are still lifes. Professor David Pascoe and artist Leon Steinmetx argue that *The Cook* pays an homage to the “*Dutch masters of still life*”, in the way that elements in a still-life have metaphysical meanings (Johnston, 2002, pp. 22, 25). Pascoe suggests that the scene wherein the wife and her lover make love whilst surrounded by dead birds refers to *A Poulterer’s Shop* by Gerrit Dou (1670). Or that the vans outside with meat and fish refer to Rembrandt’s *Slaughtered Ox* (1655). A more apparent example of still lifes are the table displays created for Spica’s dinners. These displays are seen both during the evening and at the beginning of each evening in the menu shot (figures 11 & 12).



Figure 11  
Shot of the menu on Friday, darker colors.  
(Greenaway, 1989, 00:28:57)



Figure 12  
Shot of the menu on Monday, with bright colors  
and lively food. (Greenaway, 1989, 01:09:35)



Unlike the vibrant child-like food presentation in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, the food in *The Cook* is stylized in a highly sophisticated manner. The work of Jan Davidsz de Heem might have inspired these displays, famous for his *pronkstillevens* (banquet pieces). These paintings typically promote the pleasures of ‘touch, taste, sight and possession’. They are characterized by an abundance of foods, only available for the wealthy, as they are typically not easily required due to regional or seasonal reasons. By this refusal of natural, spatial, and temporal limitations, they are more like artifacts than foods (Johnston, 2002, p.26). By incorporating still-lives into *The Cook*’s set design, this decadence and indulgence in food are shown as well. This depicts pride and greed, as wealth is exhibited and flaunted. In addition, in the case of overindulging in food (as done during dinner), acts of gluttony are supported by the display of excessive foods.

Another important display of painting is Frans Hals’ *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company* (1616), which can be seen in the background of the restaurant.



Figure 13  
*The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company* (Hals, 1616)

This painting shows a banquet of a militia company, all stately and richly dressed. It showcases the pride of the men, which can be seen and is not limited to, the wearing of expensive textiles and the ability to dine luxuriously. This display of pride is seen as an important achievement, also associated with the upcoming bourgeoisie in Holland at that time, as well as the development in Dutch painting of individual and group portraiture (Johnston, 2002, p.20). *The Cook* adds an extra layer of sin to this, by adding gluttony, lust, envy, wrath, sloth, and greed to the table as well<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the elements of this painting (portraiture, still life, and landscape), can be applied to the whole film as well. Portraiture in the sense that the film focuses on the main characters individually, to create intimacy between the audience and the character. Still life, in how the sets are arranged to create a visually interesting environment. Landscape, in how the film is shot in a linear manner.

<sup>5</sup> Gluttony, in the excessive amounts of luxurious foods – which Albert doesn’t always appreciate but still boasts about anyways. Lust, in the way Georgina longs for Michael whilst sitting next to her husband. Envy, when Albert finds out about his wife’s affair. Wrath, in the multiple ways Albert explodes in anger. Sloth, in the behavior and lounging of certain gang members who just enjoy their food without contributing to the action of conversation. Lastly, greed, in the way Albert is obsessed with wealth and showcases it during dinner.

In terms of filmmaking, a linear manner of filming refers to the style wherein the scenes are chronologically arranged. The scenes are shot in a continuous sequence with smooth transitions, helpful to convey a clear structure in film. As the film was to be shot in CinemaScope, van Os decided to make the set longer and wider. “*Je moet niet vergeten: zo’n locatie hoeft niet logisch in elkaar te zitten, zolang hij in de film maar goed oogt.*” (Ockhuysen, 2005). Because of the studio’s dimensions, it was possible to film most of the locations adjacent to each other in one, long line. This includes the car park, kitchen, dining room, and toilet. Places that were meant to be ‘outside’ had more cut transitions, such as from the street to the book depository and back to the restaurant. As the film is set around the meals in the restaurant, the camera moves so as well. Most clearly seen in the smooth transitions in the restaurant, as a meal itself. The plot manages this theme as well, with primarily Albert’s constant commentary on food and how to eat it. As the film progresses, it plucks the most out of consumption. Pup nearly dies when forced to eat all of his buttons (including his navel) and Michael dies by being force-fed pages. Ultimately, Albert is the last to dine, being forced to eat his words as it were, and has to eat Michael after which he is killed. The human body becomes a metaphor for the “excessive and insatiable consumption of society” (Black, 2006, p.116), referring to capitalism, and forms the perfect metaphor for gluttony in *The Cook*.

Related to these transitions in the film, is the theme of transgression. The characters of the film continue to make ‘improper’ use of the spaces they are in: such as making love in the bathroom and in the kitchen next to pieces of meat. A furious Albert ruins delicately decorated plates, turning a carefully prepared meal into a mess. These scenes among others seem to be inspired by the ‘*still life of disorder*’. This genre is described by art historian Norman Bryson as a scene “that represents the ongoing battle between vice and pleasure, virtue and abstention” (Fiore, 2018). An example of this can be seen in *Banquet Piece with Mince Pie* (1635) by Willem Claesz Heda (figure 14). Here we see broken glass, a fallen goblet, and a crumpled-up table cloth among other objects.

The symbols of death in the painting are combined with the sense of wealth and indulgence, which displays this battle between vice and pleasure. This is similar to *The Cook*, wherein Albert’s erratic behavior and Georgina’s lustful affair are opposed to the ornate set design. This disorderly display is further noticeable in the beautiful color-coordinated costumes which perfectly match the décor, but fail to cover bruises on Georgina’s body or Albert’s dirty hands and blotched complexion. The same can be seen in *A Clockwork Orange*, where we see multiple violent scenes in a richly decorated clean set, exemplified in figure 15.



Figure 14  
*Banquet Piece with Mince Pie*  
 (Claes J. Heda, 1635)



Figure 15  
*Still from A Clockwork Orange, the scene where Alex and his droogs ring the bell and upon entering rape the woman and force the husband to watch.* (Kubrick, 1971, 00:09:32)

The juxtaposition between action and set design therefore enhances sinful behavior and forms a powerful tool to portray sins through chaos.

Another strong tool is the use of color. As mentioned in the introduction, Greenaway relied on color as a system to “organize and structure the material of the movie” (Siegel: Gras & Gras, 2000, p. 76). In this interview, he continues to elaborate: “Blue for the car park; green for the kitchen, red for the restaurant; white for the toilet; yellow for the hospital; and a golden hue for the book depository.” These colors are not simply chosen to indicate the differences between the locations, but because they symbolize something as well. Greenaway acknowledges that green for instance is used as it means safety in the Western culture (Siegel: Gras & Gras, 2000,



p.76) and blue has a cooler connotation. The importance of color coding is also shown in the costumes of the actors, which change color whenever they walk from one location to another. Architect Alex Selenitsch has compared the color schemes of the set to scenes from Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Missingham, 1990, p. 33) and conducted the following:

Restaurant	Dining Room	Red	Hell
	Kitchen	Green	Garden of Earthly Delights
	Car Park	Blue	Death & Decay
	Meat Truck		Purgatory
	Toilets	White	Limbo
Street			Exterior
Hospital		Cream	Limbo
Book Depository	Aedicule	Natural	Purification of Adam & Eve
	Book Storeroom	Brown	Paradise

This scheme exposes the symbolic intentions of Greenaway as well. In the aforementioned interview, he explains how green not only symbolizes safety but also nature, as a mythological jungle. Red for violence and blood, blue for deathly cold. Through these colors, the set design is used to portray the cardinal sins. It is in Hell that Spica wines and dines with his gang and finally gets killed in a twisted version of the Last Supper. Georgina and Michael make love in the Garden of Earthly Delights, and it is here where they feel safe. Death and decay dominate the car park, where we see exposed dead meat. It is in Purgatory where Michael and Georgina - Adam and Eve – flee from Hell to Paradise. Compared to Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (figure 3), the cooler tones in the car park have been used for the exterior of the triptych as well. The lively colors – green, yellow, white – can be seen in Bosch's portrayal of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* as well: the place where sin and indulgence meet. Dark tones with dominant reds are used in Hell, which also forms the color palette of the Dining Room.

The white of the bathroom functions a bit differently than the other colors. On one hand, the color symbolizes purity and innocence. On the other hand, it is the place where the lovers have sex for the first time. It's heaven. As all colors combined make white, it also becomes a focal point. It is used to reflect on the audience and is self-reflexive in a way. As lighting is strongly connected to color, Greenaway worked closely with cinematographer Sacha Vierny. Vierny explicitly made certain shots very dark and cut to extremely white images, to evoke the sense of blinking (Siegel: Gras & Grass, 2000, p.77). Although the sets are drenched in color, they did not necessarily look like that in real life. This can be seen when Spica is present or not. Whenever he is present in a room, the space turns red. Whenever he leaves, the color of the space turns back to whatever it was – white, blue, green. As an integral part of set design, color becomes an optical illusion this way as well (de Vries, 2012).



Figure 16  
Used references of still lives from Ben van Os' workbook. (Ettedgui, 1999, p.156)

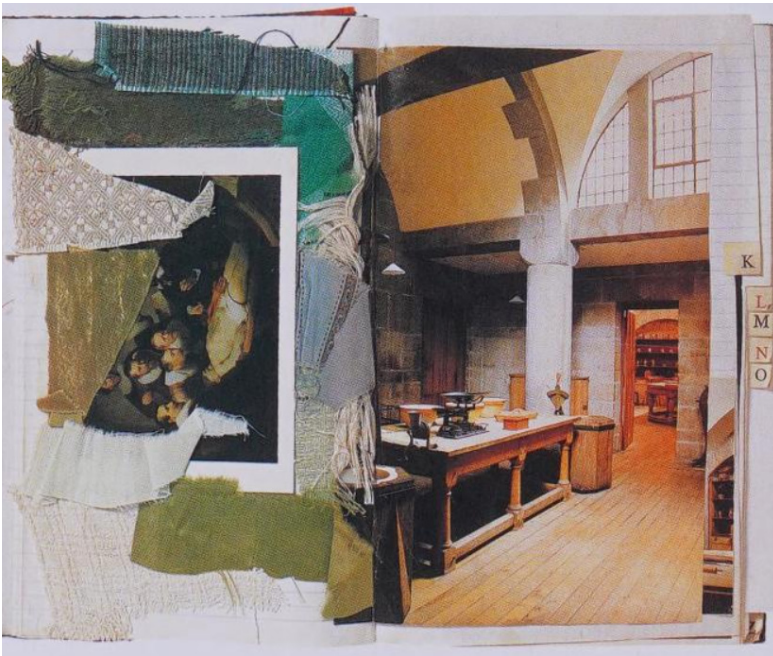


Figure 17  
Moodboard of van Os including colors and textures for the kitchen. (Ettedgui, 1999, p.156)



Figure 18  
Scraps of textile in van Os' workbook, as inspiration and reference for the dining room. (Ettedgui, 1999, p.156)



Closely related to color, is texture. This can also be seen in the workbooks of Ben van Os (figures 16 to 18) wherein he collects different pieces of fabric and saves references. This was part of van Os' more conceptual role as a set designer, while Roelfs was more involved with the technical execution (Ettegui, 1999, p. 155). Inspired by Vierny, who "*lights in layers, giving the image great depth and richness*", van Os proceeds to layer his sets similarly and designs different fields from the foreground to the background. Another key influence he mentions is Italian designer Fortuny who chose his fabrics based on their reflection of light. This inspired van Os to do the same, which can be seen in *The Cook* as well. For example, the sterile and cold bathroom is designed to sharply reflect the wrath that takes place here and to contribute to the aforementioned 'blinking effect' Greenaway wanted. On the contrary, the soft foods in the kitchen play in on the acts of lust between the wife and her lover. In addition, the film's sensory elements include the slimy raw meat and the careful placement of the food. The outfits created by Jean-Paul Gaultier also had a significant impact on the movie in terms of set design.

Van Os explicitly wanted Gaultier to design the costumes for *The Cook*, as he believed they would be perfect for the total image of the film (Ippel, 1989, p. 47). They showed the fashion designer a few still lives as seen in van Os' workbooks which formed the main inspiration for the costumes. This way, the set designers could ensure that the costumes would form a cohesive visual language with the set design. For example, the ostrich feathered coat and the dress Georgina wore in the last scene were specifically designed for the film. Ostrich feathers are a sign of wealth, but ostriches also symbolize the act of ignoring harmful situations on purpose. In Georgina's case, it seemed as if she didn't want to acknowledge the danger of her affair at first and her outfit fits this action perfectly. Also, wearing ostrich feathers is a portrayal of wealth and pride. To further investigate the appearance of the cardinal sins, these are mostly seen in and around Albert. Greed can be seen in the way Albert is portrayed, a man obsessed with wealth and possessions. Always neatly dressed, in black and red velvets which matches his wicked character. The costume he and his gang wear, is a direct reference to *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company* (figure 13) and a commentary on its extravagance. Albert's pride is seen in the place he dines every evening. The restaurant is decorated with lavish red curtains, gold-plated chairs, and crystal chandeliers. As the owner of the restaurant, this set design emphasizes his wealth and desire to flaunt it. His gluttony is shown mostly here as well, as he feasts on extravagant dishes surrounded by his henchmen as seen in figure 19. This arrangement reminds us of Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, with Albert in the center, surrounded by his followers. Ironically, they make up a group of seven.



*Figure 19*  
*Still of Albert and his gang in the dining room. Behind them, Hals' painting is visible. (Greenaway, 1989, 00:47:37)*

In comparison to the seven dwarfs and the children in Wonka's chocolate factory, it is not quite evident if Greenaway intended on drawing comparisons to the cardinal sins and Albert's gang as personifications of it.

To conclude the paragraph on the portrayal of the cardinal sins in the set design of *The Cook*, it is clear that Greenaway, Roelfs, and van Os use several tools to represent the various vices. Through mass, line, color, and texture, the film emphasizes several sins and highlights themes of sin and redemption. Moving on, it is important to examine the critical reception of *The Cook* to understand its impact on cinema and society.

### 3 The Critical Reception and Influence of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*

To provide context and frame the analysis of *The Cook* in this paper, it is necessary to review the critical reception of the film. This will provide insight into its cultural and historical significance, and help to deepen our understanding of the work. In this paragraph, we will examine the reception of the film, with a focus on its initial release and following reactions. Then, we will investigate whether the film has had a lasting impact on other works of cinema, particularly its portrayal of the cardinal sins through set design.

Upon its release in 1989, *The Cook* was met with mixed reviews. The film generated over \$500,000 in London alone and earned £640,213 in the UK (Wickman & Mettler, 2005, p. 21). Miramax acquired the and released the film in 1990. It was Greenaway's first film to be released in the States since *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) (Siegel: Gras & Grass, 2000, p. 84). Most critics praised the film for its cinematography and set design, but some are more critical for its extreme violence and pretentious symbolism (James, 1990; Travers, 1990; Polak, 1989). Nevertheless, *The Cook* was nominated for several awards including the European Film Awards and the Brit Awards. The film won awards that included Best Foreign Film from the Chicago Film Critics Association Awards and Best Director, Best Actor, Best Cinematography, and Best Original Soundtrack from the Sitges Catalanian International Film Festival (IMDb, n.d.). To keep this review concise, this passage will mainly focus on the reviews from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. These limitations are chosen as these locations each play a different important role in its release.

As *The Cook* reflects Greenaway's loathing for contemporary British materialistic values, his homeland was very much on his mind during the development of the film (Siegel: Gras & Grass, 2000, p. 81). This political intention wasn't received strongly by everyone, as Professor Leonard Quart dismisses this as "*too literal and facile*". English critic Michael Walsh on the other hand, sees the film's political critique as "*an ideologically fashionable liberal reaction to the excess of the 1980s, unsupported by a historical understanding of British politics*" and points mostly at American critics with this statement. Greenaway however, doesn't necessarily see himself as a political filmmaker but says that his political critique stems from a "*less explicit artistic position*" (Johnston, 2002, pp.19-20). Die Zeit pointed out in an interview with Greenaway that mainly many English critics have a hard time with Greenaway's art and symbolism. To this, Greenaway has responded that most people have an American film model in their heads which is "*nothing but*

*a total illusionary masturbatory massage*’, and that he is not interested in becoming a mainstream director (Gras & Grass, 2000, p. 61). It is quite ironic that he is seen as an un-English director in the UK, but considered a typical eccentric British director in the rest of Europe (Linthorst, 1989).

The director himself has a very strong connection to the Netherlands, which is not just limited to his collaboration with Dutch producers Kees Kasander and Dennis Wigman, or with set designers Roelfs and van Os. It is mostly his fascination for Dutch painting from the Golden Age that strikes him most for their metaphorical meanings (Linthorst, 1989). These metaphorical meanings are also an important theme in *The Cook*, as thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter. Greenaway states that “*there is a lot of evidence to support that the Dutch audience grasped all of this, just as the Jacobean understood Ford’s stabbed heart in ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore*” (Siegel: Gras & Grass, 2000, p. 80)<sup>6</sup>. This reasoning might explain why different Dutch newspaper outlets dive deeply into the symbolic meaning of its set design, but this could also stem from a nationalistic pride in its Dutch origins and several interviews with van Os and Roelfs. Still, Dutch critics have expressed their admiration in multitude. *De Volkskrant* (1989) applauds the brilliant costume design of Gaultier and called it a genius play of intimacy and disgusting debauchery. The set design is widely appreciated, as it’s acknowledged for its symbolism and craftsmanship (Kotteraar, 1989) with an occasional critique of how the film might have become a bit too complicated and hard to grasp (Kroon, 1989).

Whereas *The Cook* sparked political debate in the United Kingdom and the expected disgust and admiration in the Netherlands – as well as the rest of Europe - the Motion Picture Association of America found the film rather controversial (James, 1990). It started when Miramax acquired the American rights for the film after *The Cook*’s success in Europe. They did insist, however, on shortening the film to accommodate American attention spans. Greenaway wasn’t too happy about cutting the film any shorter than some trimmings but felt pressured by Dutch producers who had put a lot of money into it. After an article by *Village Voice* that said that the American version would be different than the European version, Greenaway insisted on showing the exact same version in the States as it was shown in Europe. Miramax eventually complied and accepted the consequences of it receiving an X-rating (Siegel: Gras & Grass, 2000, pp. 84-84). The MPAA gave Miramax two options: to accept this rating or to release it unrated. They chose the second, as X-rated films couldn’t be shown in cinemas. Renowned American film critic Roger Ebert criticized this course of action, stating that “*serious filmmakers like Greenaway, filmmakers with something urgent to say and*

<sup>6</sup> In the 1990 interview with Siegel (in Gras & Grass, 2000) Greenaway explains how *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (1610, Ford) was the main template for *The Cook*. It examines the phenomenon of the church and the state, and how the people would perceive this. In *The Cook*, several references to the church are being made while the film is a critique on the English state. Besides, both works treat different taboos. Whereas *‘Tis Pity* treats incest in a surprising way, *The Cook* plays with the theme of cannibalism and its symbol.

*an extreme way of saying it, suffer the MPAA's tacit censorship*" (1999). In relation to the extremities of the film, he further stated that "Those who think it is only about gluttony, lust, barbarism, and bad table manners will have to think again.", as it is a film that exhibits the strengths and weaknesses of the human body to give form to the corruption of the human soul. The film's reception by the MPAA seemed to affect the organization more than *The Cook* itself, as Ebert has formulated adequately and the New York Times finds that the "notoriety that surrounds the film sheds more light on the Motion Picture Association of America's rating system than it does on Mr. Greenaway's work". The NYT further elaborates: "The Cook has nothing sensational, pornographic or disreputable about it. And though it is not easy to sit through this film, which begins by pushing the thief's most repulsive behavior in our faces, Mr. Greenaway creates such intensity that it is impossible to turn away from the screen." (James, 1990).

It is safe to say that this display of atrocities, referred to in this thesis as the portrayal of the cardinal sins, is believed by these critics to be secondary to the film's main objective. This invites us to look further than this explicit portrayal and to dwell on the bigger picture. It comes back to the context wherein the film was written and released: during the time of Thatcherism. "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover is a passionate and angry dissertation for me on the rich, vulgarian, Philistine, anti-intellectual stance of the present cultural situation in Great Britain, supported by that wretched woman who is raping the country, destroying the welfare state, the health system, mucking up the educational system and creating havoc everywhere." (Siegel: Gras & Grass, 2000). He has further elaborated on how it is also an attack on capitalism and so resonates in countries other than the UK. Dutch communist newspaper De Waarheid (1989) thus correctly labels the film as an "Intriguing parable about consumer society". Interestingly, Greenaway views Catholicism as an extreme example of capitalism (Linthorst, 1989). This further explains how the extensive references to biblical scenes in *The Cook* serve not only for metaphorical meanings but to be read as criticism on capitalism as well.

Whether *The Cook* has had a significant influence on contemporary cinema, is hard to say. It is even harder to determine if the film's portrayal of cardinal sins through set design does the same, as there are few academic sources to support this. However, we can claim with caution that there is less of a taboo on extremely violent themes nowadays and *The Cook* might have contributed to that. *American Psycho* (Harron, 2000) for instance, is a film adaptation of the satirical book by Bret Easton Ellis. The novel caused a scandal after its publication in 1991, due to its graphic and shocking content. As many did not read it closely, the book was actually meant as a social critique of "the social conditions of postmodern consumer capitalism" (Weinreich, 2004, p. 65). The film



is nearly equally explicit with the same intentions and is quite similar to *The Cook* in that way. Regarding the cardinal sins, this theme has proven to be of relevance throughout history. From a cinematic point of view, there is a demand to create a narrative that will hold the viewers' attention. Filmmakers thus mostly prefer to portray dramatic moments rather than the mundane daily habits of people (Mitchell, 2009, p. 486). American director Cecil B. DeMille exemplifies this perfectly when he ensured that his film *The Ten Commandments* (1923) contains "plenty of sinning" to give the film mass appeal (Mitchell, 2009, p. 488). And so, it remains a subject of interest to many. A notable example of such a film is *Se7en* (Fincher, 1995), a film about the hunt for a serial killer who kills according to the seven deadly sins. While *Se7en* is quite clear on this theme, we have seen that in *The Cook* the sins are portrayed in a more nuanced way with references to biblical scenes in general. Nonetheless, this briefly shows the different ways the cardinal sins can be used as a theme. The aforementioned films *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, and *A Clockwork Orange* also fit into this list of different ways of portrayal.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, the portrayal of the cardinal sins through set design in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* was explored. Notable literary and art historic examples were used to provide a context wherein contemporary set design could be placed. Examining the historical context of how the cardinal sins were perceived is important, as it provides insights into cultural and religious values. As the concept of the seven deadly sins dates back to the early Christian Church, it has been a popular theme in art and literature. For instance, *A Divine Comedy* and *The Canterbury Tales* emphasized the idea of sin as a threat to one's salvation. The works of Bosch illustrated this in a detailed manner. Later, as society became more secular, we saw a shift in the portrayal of the cardinal sins in art. What was used mostly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as a cautionary tale, evolved into an exploration of the darker aspects of human nature for our entertainment.

When film developed as a medium, it was noticeable how the cardinal sins were used to capture the audience's attention, as it was more appealing than the display of mundane daily life. In some cases, the sins were not used merely for our entertainment, but to convey a message as well. Where *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* teaches us how the deadly sins should be balanced out to resist indulging in sin, *A Clockwork Orange* utilizes the sins to zoom in on free will versus determinism. In *The Cook*, Greenaway uses the sins to strengthen his political criticism. This is seen in the behaviors of the characters but also expressed through its set design.

By drawing inspiration from art history and painting principles, Greenaway, van Os, and Roelfs succeed in creating a baroque atmosphere in *The Cook*. The set designers use mass, composition, color, and texture to create a consistent visual style that speaks to the subconscious and improves the story's tone. By designing the set as a whole like a cathedral, van Os and Roelfs create a favorable template for biblical intertexts to take place. The arrangement of different locations is placed in linearly, to enable the tracking shot. Not only does this aid the progression of the storyline, but it also allows smooth transitions between scenes and locations. It further enhances multiple transgressions in the film and forms an example of how the set design's composition can strengthen the story. By drawing inspiration from painting, these characteristics can be seen in the set design as well. The seating arrangement, clothes, and food set-ups are examples of this. Another example is setting up scenes like a still life of disorder, as to create a strong juxtaposition between the action and ornate set. This choice in set design further enhances sinful behavior and becomes a strong way to portray this through chaos.

A visual aspect that dominates the set design in *The Cook*, is color. Greenaway's color scheme is based on European cultural connotations we have with color. Utilizing color is a strong method to set the tone and evoke emotional responses. Whereas red alarms or seduces us, green calms us down. In *The Cook*, the locations are purposefully painted according to Greenaway's scheme to achieve this effect. Concerning the portrayal of deadly sins in set design, we see how color helps aid the story. Green is the safe haven, symbolizing safety and nature. Blue stands for the cold exterior, also far on the color spectrum. These colors are an example of colors that had the same connotations for centuries now. When we look at the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, we see how green dominates the Garden and cool tones are dominant in the shutters. Color lends itself to be used to underline sinful behavior: to lust in safety, to be engulfed by gluttony.

The baroque environment Greenaway envisioned for the film formed the perfect backdrop for his Jacobean-inspired story to take place. The chaos, comprised of evil and havoc, represents the state of the United Kingdom as the director saw it under Thatcher. By deliberately emphasizing the immorality in the film, *The Cook* unfolds in an angry and passionate commentary on the country's state. It shows how set design in film can help to convey this visually.

Through researching set design in *The Cook*, this thesis aims to provide a better understanding of its role in conveying a message in film. By focusing on the way set design can be used to portray the cardinal sins, the variety of its capabilities has been examined. This research will therefore serve as a useful guide for detecting and interpreting set design in other films. For further research, it is recommended that different films will be investigated to make this research more profound. For instance, an analysis of films from different eras could offer a historical overview of the use of set design and how these portray the cardinal sins. Also, by investigating more films that cover the topic of the cardinal sins, it can become clearer what the range of set design is in terms of portraying the sins.

Overall, set design is an essential component of filmmaking that can successfully communicate the core ideas and messages of a film. It holds the ability to provoke emotional responses from the audience and adds depth. Set design further enables the development of a consistent visual language that improves the overall viewing experience. To completely fulfill one's cinematic vision, it is important that filmmakers carefully consider and use set design.



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