

Rae Deslich Transcript

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[00:00:17] **Bryan:** Bryan Smith here and welcome to the dream path podcast, where I try to get inside the heads of talented creatives from all over the world.

[00:00:26] My goal is to demystify and humanize the creative process and make it accessible to everyone. Now let's jump in. Rae Deslich is on the show. Rae is a Los Angeles-based television and film set decorator. Who has worked on shows like Comedy Central's *Drunk History* and reboots of *Party of Five*, *Supermarket Sweep*, and *Head of The Class* on HBO Max.

[00:00:50] Their most recent film is *Promising Young Woman*, starring Carey Mulligan and Bo Burnham and directed by Emerald Fennell. I'm recording this intro the day before the Academy awards ceremony, so I don't know how that will play out, but *Promising Young Woman* was nominated for five Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Actress and Best Screenplay.

[00:01:10] So, if you haven't seen it yet, go check it out. It's one of the most compelling films of the year. Rae and I of course talked about *Promising Young Woman*, which I saw at Sundance and watch it again before the interview. But our chat was wide ranging and covered how Rae worked with the director and production designer to create the look and feel of the film, how Rae made their way to Hollywood and how they broke into the film industry.

[00:01:32] I was introduced to Rae through a previous guest production designer, Adri Siriawatt, who I interviewed at Sundance. And I'm grateful Adri made that connection. I not only learned a lot about the work that goes into creating visually compelling scenes and movies like *Promising Young Woman*, but I also gained a greater appreciation for the very specific roles that film crews play to make movie magic happen.

[00:01:54] So let's jump into my chat with Rae Deslich, Rae Deslich. Welcome to the podcast.

[00:02:00] **Rae:** Thank you so much. Thanks for having me.

[00:02:02] **Bryan:** Yeah. So, I wanted to give listeners a frame of reference for how I met you. I met you through Adri Siriawatt, one who I interviewed at Sundance. This was Sundance of 2020, right before the pandemic hit. And she was on a film called *The Last Shift* and we had a lovely chat. And she was kind enough to introduce me to you. And we're here to talk about a lot of things, but *Promising Young Woman*, we would be remiss if we didn't start off with that subject, so how are you feeling right now about, about where this film sits and your role in making this happen?

[00:02:41] **Rae:** I feel great about it. I've been really excited about all of the awards attention that it's been getting. The waiting period that was brought on by the pandemic

was really hard, you know, because of course it was supposed to come out in theaters, I think in April of 2020. And, you know, premiered at Sundance and everyone was really excited about it and they were talking it up like crazy.

[00:03:04] And then the pandemic hit, and movie theaters shut down and we were like, "great, is this movie ever going to come out then?" And eventually they made the decision to just put it out on streets so that they didn't, you know, lose their steam completely. Also I think there was some like awards, eligibility stuff that made them choose to put it out right before the end of the year.

[00:03:27] But yeah, a lot of people have seen it, and a lot of people are talking about it. And a lot of people are actually noticing like the design and the decor in it, which is really nice because very often the, the average audience and the average viewer, all of that stuff happens very subconsciously for them, but on this one, people actually calling it out and being like, well, like the color palette, you know, noticing it at their level of comprehension, which is, you know, which is great. That's what you can ask for.

[00:03:53] **Bryan:** That's fantastic. And I, you know, I saw promising young woman at Sundance and I interviewed the film composer, Anthony Willis there as well, and what I noticed about the set decoration and the color palette was there was a juxtaposition between the subject matter and the colors. And you're right, it is, it is subconscious to some degree, but I think in this film, it is a lot more obvious than others because of just how dark it is. I mean, this is a really dark film and the juxtaposition of the dark subject matter with these vibrant colors and especially in the pharmacy scene and the coffee shop scenes in the costume design too. It really creates. I the way I framed it with Anthony Willis, I think is, is kind of unsettling for the audience. You're kind of like unmoored to where, how are you supposed to feel about this scene or how are you supposed to feel about?

[00:04:50] **Rae:** Yeah, funny thing, I don't think that every viewer has that reaction to it because. So, I am a weak person and I read like Twitter comments about the movie. And, I've noticed that a lot of like millennial women respond very positively to the color palette and they're less put off by the mismatch between the subject matter and the color palette, then I think probably a lot of men are because to them it feels very natural and it brings out, two sort of truths that I've been pointing out, about the color palette in a lot of like design-based-interviews is, you know, colors are socialized. Like there's nothing inherent about them that makes them that way. There's nothing inherent about red, that makes it an angry color. It's culturally socialized to be that right. So, there's nothing about blue and pink that makes them inherently light, friendly, happy colors, that's just what we've assigned them to be. So, there's nothing really, there's no actual rule that says that a revenge movie cannot be filled with bright candy colors. We've all just decided that revenge movies have to look like *Memento* for some reason, and be like no shade to, you know, Nolan movies or that color palette in general, but it was decided that revenge movies have to be this like dark cold color palette.

[00:06:16] **Bryan:** Right.

[00:06:16] **Rae:** And that they can be bright and colorful and warm when that's not the case at all. And the other sort of truth to it is, is like the whole movie is it's very much from Cathy's perspective and people don't change when something traumatic happens to them, even if you'd like to blue and pink before something traumatic happens, you still like blue and pink.

[00:06:42] **Bryan:** Right.

[00:06:42] **Rae:** You know, there may be things in your life that changed, but you know, uh, you don't, it's not like *Alias*, you don't just like throw out all of your colorful clothing and only wear black leather. You do it, whatever. However, you deal with, you know, what's happening to you, you do it your way, and so like, if you, as Cassie is like a 30 something woman who grew up in the nineties and has this very like millennial pink world and millennial pink, like aesthetic in her head. Like they're going to keep it. You're just going to like commit revenge with that color palette.

[00:07:16] **Bryan:** I think another way that it's been approached before is like with Quentin Tarantino and the *Kill Bill* movies, you almost have like this comic book, color palette, and a comic book type of violence and, you know, heightened violence that almost becomes comic.

[00:07:32] But this is different. This is almost like a romcom type of color palette and it's so pleasant and fun. And Bo Burnham is so funny and it's like, you're you have this sense of hope and optimism for this woman who's damaged and traumatized. But you know, when you say women react more positively to the color palette than men, I still reacted positively the film, I loved the film, and I also love the fact that- what I love about art and what I think makes art good. If it's possible to even have that judgment about art, but we all know what we like when we see it. I like to have questions. I like to wonder things as I'm watching and after I'm watching the film.

[00:08:15] Asking myself questions. How do I feel about this? How did this make me feel? And I don't like going through a movie like, "Oh, this is just your standard. Three-act romcom. Where at the end, the guy gets the girl or whatever the outcome is. This one really makes you think. And I think it purposefully Emerald Fennell just does a fantastic job in these scenes with these dates that she goes on and making you queasy.

[00:08:45] I mean, you're at, at first, you're kind of like, "Oh, this is going to be, you know, a date" and then it gets dark and it's such an important film for that reason is that it makes you feel things and see things that have never really been told before in this way.

[00:08:59] **Rae:** Yeah. I weirdly, I started reading the script on a plane because I was out of town the weekend before my job interview for the movie.

[00:09:07] And I got just to the end of this, I can't imagine we can talk about this movie without giving spoilers away. But I got just to the end, nearly the end of the first encounter, the Lumber's jazz and, you know, made me sick to my stomach because I was just like, "Oh my God, this is just going to be, you know, some other very trashy, you know, exploitative like masquerading as a rape prevention film" and made me sick, thinking about all of the

things that are going to happen in the movie and that I'm going to have to experience by reading it and.

[00:09:39] And then I had to like switch planes in the middle of reading the script. And it was real weird. Cause I was just trying to like go through the, you know, all the, the minutia of like getting off a plane, like buying a bottle of waters, like getting on a plane, getting seated all the while I just have this like cloud of the script for *Promising Young Woman* over my head and then I opened it back up and it just like took off, you know, completely weird direction so that the reading, the script itself was an experience on its own.

[00:10:09] **Bryan:** So, when you read the script, you're looking at the story, you're looking at the characters and the subject matter. What were you thinking independently before talking to Emerald about the color palette and the set decoration?

[00:10:22] **Rae:** To be honest, I really had no idea of what we were going to do with this movie to start off with. I, you know, I read a dark movie about a serious topic, and I thought it was all gonna be, you know, dark blues and de-saturated colors and, you know, cold gritty locations. And then I remember walking into the art department office for my interview and just being like, what is this? Because, you know, as Adri has explained, you know, her previous interview with you. What we do in our department officers is we just plaster the place with reference materials, you know, boards for the set inspiration, photos of possible things we want to use, even like the logo, you know, as it gets worked on. And it was just like bright and warm, and there was like pink and blue and yellow everywhere. And I was like, "this is crazy, what are we doing?" And then, you know, it's part of my interview, the production designer and the art director explains Emerald's concept for the production design. And I was just blown away, you know? Cause it's really, it's not anything that we've ever seen before, it's not anything I've done before to just so strongly present, like both of these things. This dark narrative and these bright colors and just put them together forward equally and kind of like make the viewer reconcile them both. It's very bold.

[00:11:48] **Bryan:** Sounds very intentional on Emerald's part.

[00:11:51] **Rae:** Absolutely. And I think everything in this movie was intentional.

[00:11:54] You know, some projects, you know, you can look at a couch and be like, I don't know why was it that couch? But honestly, everything on this movie was so thoughtfully chosen. Emerald had a lot of strong opinions. So, you can just directly attribute so many of the choices in the movie to her, but then she was even decisive enough that if he didn't have an opinion, she would say, well, what's your opinion.

[00:12:19] You know, tell me what you think. And we would always have, you know, justification. We could say like, well, I think it should be kind of like a boring piece of art in Ryan's house. Cause he sort of lives the unexamined life. You know, maybe he didn't even buy the art, maybe it just, maybe the house was furnished by like a corporate staging company or it was apartments furniture or whatever.

[00:12:41] And she'd be like, "yeah, I like that. That's great. Go with that." You know, she was very clear on the things that she had answers for and the things that she didn't. She was

very open to hearing somebody else's ideas and justifications and trusting us, you know, because we're design professionals. So, you know, you would tell her, like, I think it should be this. And she'd be like, that's great. I believe you.

[00:13:03] **Bryan:** Yeah. So, she has humility as the person who controls, literally everything. She still has that humility to listen to others and incorporate their ideas and recognize when she doesn't have all the answers.

[00:13:15] **Rae:** Yeah, and she really trusts, you know, the people that she's hired, which sounds like a crazy thing, but it doesn't always happen.

[00:13:21] You know, she, she trusts that if you're doing this job, then you know what you're talking about and that, you know, you have good reasons for making the choice that you do. And that kind of trusting your department has, is just it's wonderful.

[00:13:34] **Bryan:** Before I ask you this next question, I have to ask you about the giant bird behind you, or what is that and what is that?

[00:13:43] **Rae:** So, that's a costume that my spouse and I built together. It's an Owlbear, which is a monster from like vintage, Dungeons and Dragons. And we're both giant nerds. And we just built this costume for like a costume ball one year, and then, you know, you need somewhere to keep it, so it's on a mannequin and that was where it lived. And then this year of a million zooms happened and we were just like, well, I guess this is where he lives now. This is my house behind me. There's a lot of taxidermy and things like that in it, so that gives people something to look at during zoom meetings.

[00:14:21] **Bryan:** Well, I can definitely tell you're a set decorator by just looking in the background. It's not just the bird costume, but there's all kinds of interesting things in a spiral staircase. Going back to, your work on *Promising Young Woman*, Michael Perry was the production designer. How did you work with Michael on this film? And the reason I'm specifically asking you this question is that in your IMDB bio there's a list of credits for set decorator, a list of credits for art department and then art director, and then production designer. And I went through this with Adri a little bit, but I'm still a little confused about how all of these folks work together in terms of the roles that they play on a film.

[00:15:03] **Rae:** It is a fairly complex, you know, sort of pyramid structure, the best easiest one to remember is that the production designer is the boss of the arts department, you know, they're at the very top. And from then it just sort of turns into like a tree structure below that, where everybody takes on, you know, certain little areas of, you know, of work in the movie.

[00:15:24] And, you know, you've noticed that I've done a bunch of different jobs and, you know, on a bigger or smaller film, the work can be like bigger or smaller sized production designed movies that were smaller or I've, you know, been a, a set decoration shopper on projects that were much bigger. You know, your position kind of moves up and down, like with the waterline.

[00:15:47] And then also, like IMDB records, everything you ever did ever. So, a lot of those credits are like 20 years old. As a set decorator what I do is I often say everything from the walls outwards, so not the wall coverings or the set walls, because that's the art director and the construction department, but, you know, drapery rugs furniture. If you're in say a commercial or an industrial setting, it's all of the trash or all of the factory pieces, or, you know, the kitchen equipment in an industrial kitchen, or, if you're in a restaurant, it's all of the little fixtures that make it feel like a restaurant, like the exit signs or, you know, the wall vents, or the commercial, fire, signage, stuff like that. It's, it's really anything on screen that isn't a wall or a prop, because of course the prop master has their own little kingdom over there. Yeah, and so, you know, dividing up the work. Is a big part of it. There's classic lines that things go on and it can change from country to country too. Like, you know, so like UK art departments are a bit different from the US art department. And sometimes there are things that are kind of in between, you know, like there might be a piece of futuristic computer, whatever, in a sci-fi movie and depending how big it is or whether, or not have, has to get fabricated, you know, the prop master and myself will sit down and we'll say, is that you or is that me?

[00:17:14] **Bryan:** Hmm.

[00:17:15] **Rae:** There's always a lot of like is that you or is that me?

[00:17:18] **Bryan:** On an indie film, you probably have to wear a lot of hats in the art department and maybe on a TV set, like *Drunk History*, the roles are a little more defined and everybody knows what their lane is and maybe bigger studio movies, the same thing, but on indie films, do you, are you forced to, because of budget, just wear more hats in the art department and do more under one title.

[00:17:42] **Rae:** Yeah, to some extent there is such a thing as low budget television as well. So, *Drunk History* was not the biggest of TV shows, to be honest. You know, we had certain limitations, like we didn't have the construction department because we didn't have, you know, the budget or the time for that. So, I would say the same problems, afflict, you know, like smaller TV shows as a flick, indie films, or low budget films.

[00:18:09] Yeah, you do it kind of contracts a little bit, but you still kind of try to keep it all within everybody's lane. You know, so for instance, on *Promising Young Woman*, our art director, Liz didn't have a construction coordinator. She had to like hire on construction people for the individual projects that we had to do and then like manage them herself.

[00:18:32] Whereas normally there'd be a construction coordinator and maybe even a construction foreman. Or, you know, I would try to, instead of like things that I could have had made, I would just simply buy them, you know, ready-made or our prop master had to do a lot of hand fabrication, for some hero props, things like that. You, you do still kind of try to keep it within your lane, especially because that's just what you have experience in, you know.

[00:18:58] **Bryan:** That makes sense.

[00:18:59] **Rae:** I would not attempt to take over like the graphic design department, no matter how small a project got, because I'm just not good at that.

[00:19:07] **Bryan:** So, in terms of the day-to-day stuff that you do on a film, I would imagine you are there for the shoot, obviously, because things are changing, locations are changing and you need to be there versus the production designer.

[00:19:21] In my understanding from talking to Adri is that the production designer is doing a lot more work in advance, as opposed to being there on a day-to-day basis during the shoot. Is that your experience as well?

[00:19:34] **Rae:** It's really a lot more similar to the production designer. We have, most of our work is done in prep, honestly. You can't dress the set while they're shooting it. That's just a simple fact of life. It needs to be dressed before everybody gets there. And, if you've done your job right, then everyone has seen a lot of pre-visualization materials, so they have a reasonable expectation of what the set looks like and that's okay.

[00:19:59] That's a big part of the prep is like getting people to look at things and saying like, "this is what it's going to look like. Will that work for you? Do you like it?" And then you get onto set, shooting company moves to that set. And I do, what's called opening the set where I just sort of stand there and I'm like, "do you like it? Do you need any changes?" And there's also of course, the on-set dresser who will be there the entire time. And that person's job is just to maintain the set. And, you know, make changes as needed for camera. If someone needs to put a light where that side table is, they pull the side table out and then they put it back when they look back at that direction.

[00:20:38] But really like the goal, you know, the dream is for changes to not be happening during shooting because that is not efficient. And that is a sign that something went wrong in prep, honestly, that you didn't talk about it ahead of time or you didn't decide it. We have this joke in one of the arts departments that I work in, where we say fix it in prep, which is a variation of course, on fix it in post, which is, you know, a joke in productions worldwide, but, you know, that's sort of like a, a toss off like, "Oh, well, you know, we fucked up or it's bad, so we'll just fix it in post we'll paint over it with VFX."

[00:21:18] **Bryan:** Right.

[00:21:19] **Rae:** But, you know, that's, the goal really is to fix it in the prep and to like figure out what it's going to look like to show it to everybody, get their sign off on it so that when they walk in, they don't go.

[00:21:29] "I didn't think it would look like this", but they walk in and they go, "this is beautiful. This is exactly what we wanted." And then your job is done. And then you can start prepping the next episode or the next set or whatever, because there's always something to be done. That's coming up, you know, next week is coming for you.

[00:21:46] **Bryan:** As you may have noticed. There are great resources and advice mentioned in all our episodes. And for many of them, we actually collect all of these resources for you in one easy place: our newsletter, you can go to dreampathpod.com/newsletter to join. It's not

fancy, just an email about each week's episode, featured artists and resources to help you on your journey.

[00:22:10] Now back to the interview. One of the fun parts about this film is that some of these sets and locations are so distinct that they're almost characters in and of themselves, the cafe or the coffee shop is one the pharmacy with all of those wonderful colors that are just popping and, you know, kind of that romantic scene that's happening in there, and then of course, the parent's house. Which is almost like a museum of muted colors that are faded from the sun hitting the couch or whatever is just sort of locked in time. And then you have this cabin where the bachelor party happened. That is it's so distinct, and obviously so much thought is put into that in advance.

[00:22:55] My question to you is how much were you working with Emerald to create that vibe for each of those sets in advance so that by the time they were shooting, they didn't have to make the changes and they were fixing it in prep, as you say?

[00:23:11] **Rae:** Oh, we were working together so closely. You know, she would visit the office very often and we had very comprehensive mood boards.

[00:23:19] She's even spoken about our mood boards in her like Oscar interviews, which is great. And they really helped us all get on the same page as to what these sets needed to look like. Our art director Liz Kloczkowski did very detailed set renderings. And, if you see some of them, it's like amazing how much my actual set looks like the renderings.

[00:23:45] You know, we really did deliver what we said we were going to deliver. And, you know, we were very clear about specifically what they could expect. Like the complete overload of like blue and green plaid in the cabin bedroom near the end, we pinned that early on and we were like, yeah, we're going to do this, like, Hunter plaid all over this bedroom, like all over it. Carpets, curtains, bedspread, everything. And Emerald was like, "it's insane. I love it."

[00:24:15] **Bryan:** Plaid overload.

[00:24:16] **Rae:** Exactly. So, you know, and sometimes she would have these ideas that had established, you know, in her head ahead of time. And she'd say, you know what? I would like to see him there.

[00:24:25] Or she would reference certain TV shows or movies. A lot of our references come from like *Murder She Wrote*.

[00:24:33] **Bryan:** That's funny.

[00:24:34] **Rae:** Or you know, nineties or nineties television, because *Promising Young Woman* is also very much a story about the stories that we tell ourselves. The stories that we have in our heads, you know, the, the romcom story, or the revenge story, or, you know, even near the end, like the bachelor party, Vegas stripper story, and how these stories fail us in real life and how, you know, the ways in which they express a mythic truth or the ways in which they fail us. So, with our sets, we're not just referencing real life, we're referencing

like other movie and television sets. So, it's kind of meta in that way. I noticed a really weird similarity between like Saturday night live, did a bachelor party sketch like a week or two ago. And their set looks exactly like my bachelor party sketch to the extent that like, I don't know if we were working off of the same mental image or if it was actually a reference, very curious.

[00:25:39] **Bryan:** Yeah. Or just a rip off. Cause that, that could happen too.

[00:25:42] **Rae:** I wouldn't say rip off, like I would say like a reference.

[00:25:46] **Bryan:** Yeah. Yeah. Just to be charitable and kind to them because you can have parallel paths to the same idea.

[00:25:53] **Rae:** Yeah. And I mean, like we were referencing other movies, you know, dudebro party movies that use the same sort of location. Like "let's all get a house in the country and party dude." So, you know, our references, their references that references their references.

[00:26:07] **Bryan:** Right, right. There's an old saying artists feed off of each other.

[00:26:11] **Rae:** Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. You know,

[00:26:13] **Bryan:** well, done very well done on *Promising Young Woman* and all of these accolades and award nominations, you know, the Academy awards, the nominations, just incredible to see that type of recognition for this film.

[00:26:29] Let's go back a little bit. I want to know how you got into this business because when I think about getting your foot in the door of the film industry. To me, it's a black box. I'm not in it. I've talked to a lot of filmmakers, a lot of directors and screenwriters, but not a lot of folks who are doing set decoration, production design, and that type of work. So, how did you get your foot in the door?

[00:26:54] **Rae:** Yeah, I think a lot of people outside the business don't know all of the professions that exist. I went to film school. Of course, I actually went to the same film school as Adri, and that's how we know each other. And I went because I had a high school teacher. I was doing a lot of like digital video editing at the time.

[00:27:15] 'Cause it was the nineties and that was, you know, what it was back then. And they said, "Hey, you're really good at this. You should go to film school." And I never really considered that as like a career option that you could like go to college for this and maybe be good at it and maybe get a job in it.

[00:27:30] So, I did, and I started working on student films, you know, the, the other ones that your friends are working on. And I actually thought that I would be an editor to start off with, because that was simply what I had done in high school. But I have always had a natural talent for making things. I'm very crafty.

[00:27:51] I don't come from an art background or any way, a fine art background, the same way that a lot of my peers do, I grew up, you know, building and making things, and I still do

just for fun, like this monster behind me. And so when it came down to, you know, helping my friends out with their student films, like I was always the one who knew how to make a college classroom look like a hospital room or whatever you all just sort of like sorting hat yourselves into like different roles.

[00:28:20] **Bryan:** Yeah.

[00:28:21] **Rae:** Yeah, it's kinda how it happens. Except you do it yourself, obviously. It's like a, you know, it's like a participatory process and then, you know, people grow and change throughout that. I production designed small films, or I would, you know, try out, I think I tried out doing like costumes, or props or, you know, you sort of like do a little meandering path through the departments based on like, what other people need you to do, what you like doing, what you're good at. And it's good to kind of get all those different kinds of experience in different positions. I started working on, you know, bigger student films and then onto like absolutely zero budget, you know, micro, independent movies. And then you start to get like a portfolio and some experience and people started to hire you for the jobs that actually pay, though like, very little, and then, you know, it just keeps going and going and going based on that.

[00:29:19] So, I worked my way up. I worked a few years in Chicago and then I moved out here to Los Angeles. I worked on independent things out here for a little bit. And then, at some point I got into the union that we have out here, and I worked as a set dresser for a few years, which is like the person that carries the furniture.

[00:29:42] **Bryan:** You know, starting at the bottom. Right?

[00:29:45] **Rae:** Exactly. Yeah. The set dresser is like the person that I direct these days, but it was so good because then you get to see a set, decorator work and you get to look at them and you go, "wow. Like, look at those floor plans you have, look how you decided ahead of time, where it should all go."

[00:30:01] Like how we have these lists of what we should pick up. And then I worked a little bit as a set decoration buyer where you actually go out and find the things, make sure they get picked up. And so, all of that was just working my way towards where I am today, which is the set decorator. And that's the head of the set decoration department.

[00:30:19] **Bryan:** And are you always a freelancer or do you work for, a company?

[00:30:24] **Rae:** We're always freelancers, yeah. There's I don't think there's very rarely such a thing as like an in-house any things you think, like some propmasters, or some, some prop houses have in-house set decorators, but we're freelancers and you know, maybe you take like a longer gig than a shorter one and you get a little bit of stability that way, but is very much sort of like a contract work thing.

[00:30:49] **Bryan:** For my listeners who might be interested in getting into the film industry, how important was film school for you and how important is it for others as you, from your perspective that people that you work with that have been to film school? Haven't been to film school.

[00:31:04] **Rae:** It was important for me because I'm actually very shy naturally and working in film involves working with a lot of different people and getting out there and being proactive. And I needed that structure weirdly to help me like get out there, you know? And so, you know, similarly, if you don't feel like you have an in, or if you don't feel like you kind of know where to go or what to do, it can be very helpful.

[00:31:34] Also these days, a lot of colleges have really caught on to production design. And when I went to film school, there were very few dedicated production design programs, but these days there's a lot and they're very good. And they have very specific like classes about, you know, decorating and shopping and all the different parts of the job.

[00:31:57] So, one could learn quite a bit from that. On the other hand, just experience is also very good. Some people that I know, went to school for something completely different and just sort of jumped into the business and started doing it and worked their way up completely. And that's also incredibly valid.

[00:32:19] **Bryan:** And in terms of your, your day, your week, your month and what you do for a living, what are the things that you enjoy most? And it can be anything from your schedule and the fact that you make your own schedule in terms of the projects you choose. It could be the day-to-day tasks that you do for a director.

[00:32:41] And also, what are the things that you like least about this job? What I'm trying to do is educate my listeners about this particular job in the film industry, so that they can consider it for themselves.

[00:32:53] **Rae:** I do like working with other people, but not like hundreds of them. My job is a little bit offset as a set decorator because I'm a sort of a manager.

[00:33:05] And so I enjoy not having to be in contact with like several hundred people every single day. Cause that's a bit overwhelming, and it's nice to just have like the 10 people in my department. You know, I love shopping and I love furniture. I love history. I love knowing where things came from, and I was always a really big history nerd.

[00:33:23] So that's kind of a thing that keeps me centered in this job is I just love interesting spaces, not just beautiful ones, or well-designed ones, but, you know, I love the spaces of the world. I love learning about people and how they live. And so that kind of curiosity is really like the fire that keeps me going.

[00:33:45] There's a lot of logistics that sort of unavoidable, and there's a lot of, you know, budgets are still a thing and schedules and, you know, I wouldn't say they're my favorite part of the job that you do get used to them and you get good at them. You know, the, the uncertainty of sort of, you know, a good thing, bad thing too, you know, you can take a job for six months and then it just goes away and there's nothing you can do about it.

[00:34:11] And that's a real weird one. So, it's definitely, I would say that it's not for the faint of heart, except like you get used to it, you know?

[00:34:18] **Bryan:** Yeah.

[00:34:19] **Rae:** A lot of people say like, Oh, I don't know if I could deal with that kind of uncertainty, but I didn't think that I could either. And then I did, so I think a lot more people have it in them and they realize it is very fast paced.

[00:34:34] The days are very long, and the work is uniformly very hard, but then when it's done, you get to like completely fall apart for, you know, a couple of weeks. And that's nice. It is always different. And that's the thing that also keeps me going, 'cause I get bored all the time. I would get bored, you know, even designing the same house over and over again, and so it's always changing. It's something new every day. It's something drastically new every project, and that, you know, something exciting and that keeps your brain firing.

[00:35:04] **Bryan:** In terms of television versus film, do you have a preference, the steadiness of television, the certainty of it, the schedule, the routine versus, you know, a brand new film project that has a start and an end date.

[00:35:18] What is your preference there? If you have one.

[00:35:20] **Rae:** I used to only want to work on films because you know, that used to be the only place that really art was made. But with the resurgence of or, I suppose that the surge of prestige TV these days, now there is a level of art happening on television that used to only happen in feature films. Particularly in like big budget event, genre, TV, you know, everyone talks about like *Game of Thrones*, but also things like *Alienist* or *Penny Dreadful* or shows like that.

[00:35:55] People are really starting to realize that they can tell a crazier, weirder story with the limited series. And I think that's great. Structurally the format of television is actually kind of nice because you do get into a pattern and it's just sort of a way to make sense of the madness. Like I said, you know, you open a set it's the first day of the episode or whatever, and you show it to, you know, like the showrunner and the director and everybody loves it.

[00:36:25] And you're like great onto the next episode. And there does get to be a regular cycle of like meetings, prep, you know, shopping, dressing, and you know, like a rotating cycle and it, so it does actually manage to bring some structure and some order to your work. That's kind of one nice thing about television.

[00:36:44] **Bryan:** So, what do you have coming up next? I noticed that there's some reboots happening, a reboot for *Head of the Class* that is going to be on HBO Max, tell us about that.

[00:36:55] **Rae:** That's right. So, I just finished that and that's a pilot. We haven't heard yet whether or not it will go to season, but it's a reboot of the classic eighties TV show, *Head of the Class*, which is about like a cool teacher and their honors class students.

[00:37:14] And this one is like an updated version featuring, you know, high schoolers who are in like a very high achieving high school in Silicon Valley. And their teacher is kind of a burnout from one of the local tech companies, which is very relevant because I'm from the Bay area. And I know a lot of those people, but it was interesting, it's a sitcom and I had never done a sitcom before. And I do think that I prefer single camera. You know, what people think of as narrative television better, but it was nice to try out a different format,

and it was one of the, one of the biggest differences was that we didn't have a live studio audience, because of course it's a pandemic. And we shot it in fall of 2020. So we absolutely couldn't have even 50 people, you know, on bleachers watching the show as they usually do. So, the, the actors had to play to absolutely no one, which was probably really weird for them, you know?

[00:38:14] **Bryan:** Not ideal in a sitcom.

[00:38:16] **Rae:** No. Yeah. But we made it work and I did some lovely sets that I'm very proud of.

[00:38:21] The show will be very funny. Hopefully gets picked up and it'll be great for everybody involved. So, that's going to come out at some point, my project before that was the again, reboot of *Supermarket Sweep* and that finished its run in early January. So, if you caught that, that was also something else that I worked on and we were very proud of that as well.

[00:38:43] **Bryan:** And what network is that on?

[00:38:45] **Rae:** That one was on ABC.

[00:38:47] **Bryan:** Okay. Yeah, that's a fun one, I think these reboots are interesting because what they're doing is tapping into this nostalgia that we all have for a different time when, before the pandemic, when things were different in the eighties and nineties, and these are really solid shows that they're rebooting, but it's interesting to see so many reboots happening as opposed to just, you know, brand new content that isn't referencing anything.

[00:39:13] **Rae:** Yeah. And the reboot mania started before the pandemic. And a lot of people do attribute it to just, you know, Hollywood being lazy. But the interesting thing to me is if you go back and look at, say, you know, Hollywood history and like the thirties or in the fifties or whatever, there were maybe not as many reboots as there are right now, but there was still quite a few, like there's a movie series called "The Golddiggers of" fill in the year here.

[00:39:38] And they did like four of those. Like the Golddiggers in 1938 and the gold diggers, the 1942, the remade *Scarface*, like a billion times, you know, before the opportunity version, there was just a like classic, you know, a New York Italian mobster version. Then I think there were like two versions of that. So it's not-

[00:39:58] **Bryan:** *Dirty Dancing* was remade, yeah.

[00:40:00] **Rae:** Really?

[00:40:00] **Bryan:** Yeah. A lot of remakes.

[00:40:03] **Rae:** Yeah, so even before the 2000s or so Hollywood did a lot of remakes, and it wasn't regarded so much as a reboot or remake as it was just we're updating it. Part of it was like, you know, they were updating it from like the color era from the black and white era to the color era or like from a silent to a talky. But it is weirdly not a new phenomenon.

[00:40:25] **Bryan:** Yeah. And also your work on *Gilmore girls*. I noticed you did a revival of *Gilmore girls* in 2016. My kids have watched that series and my wife probably five separate times all the way through. They just love it.

[00:40:40] **Rae:** I've done so many rebates. It's crazy. Yeah, and that show has some just mega fans.

[00:40:46] It's amazing. I was actually the speaking of, I was the set decoration shopper on that. So, there was a set decorator that we all worked for, Linda Spirits and the decorator who did *Empire Records* actually.

[00:41:00] **Bryan:** Oh cool.

[00:41:01] **Rae:** Just a classic of the nineties. And so, she was the set decorator. And then, you know, she would give us lists or sets or talking points or, you know, sort of crucial areas.

[00:41:14] And we would go out and get a certain thing. Like I would get the furniture for the seating areas at Chilton school, or I would get, you know, petticoats to hang up at Ms. Petty's dance school or truckloads of candy to fill up the candy shop. In stars hollow, you know, little projects like that. Yeah.

[00:41:35] Again, different every day, always, you know, super weird. And they're writing three set, decoration shoppers on that show, it was a big, big job. We had a lot of work to do. And that was just the revival. And that wasn't even the original series, because that was, I think, a good 10 or 15 years before that. But that was a, that was a really fun and really interesting job.

[00:41:56] And I learned a lot, you know, cause at that point you're basically assisting a set decorator in their job, and you get to see how they do it and learn things from them. So

[00:42:05] **Bryan:** I'm going to tell my listeners where people can find you. You have one of the coolest website URLs I've ever seen, radioactive.net, your, your personal website.

[00:42:16] That's so cool. Thank you. And you're also on Instagram @radioactive, right? Any other places where people can find you and reach out to you with questions and interact with you on the web?

[00:42:30] **Rae:** I think that's it. It's the website and Instagram and, you know, I'm, I'm not on tech talk or anything like that, but you know, my email address is on my website and it's sort of a blended personal and professional Instagram.

[00:42:43] So, you know, there might be photos of food on there. If you go. That's.

[00:42:49] **Bryan:** Right on Rae Deslich, it's been such a pleasure to talk to you and learn about this industry and congratulations on *Promising Young Woman*, what a fantastic project to be part of.

[00:42:59] **Rae:** Wonderful. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:43:02] **Bryan:** Hey, thank you for listening and I hope you enjoy today's episode.

[00:43:06] If so, I have a favor to ask. Can you go to wherever you listen to podcasts and leave me a review? Your feedback is what keeps this podcast going. You can also check us out on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook with the handle @dreampathpod, and as always go find your dream path.