

Visual design – taxi driver

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Nothing about him really stands out, yet it is later revealed that he is a mentally unstable war veteran honorably discharged from the U. S. Marines after the Vietnam War. HIS only escape from himself appears to be watching porno movies, driving customers during the graveyard shift, and purging the community of its rampant filth and corruption. Moments like these make it later apparent that Taxi Driver strategically employs the use of props and colored lighting to convey the message that Travis Fickle (Robert Denier) is a disillusioned man who is tortured by his own personal nightmare of social rejection and powerlessness.

Red is the color of excitement, passion, and love, emotions that Travis longs to feel. However, it is evident that he has no prior experience exploring these qualities, and comes across as awkward with human confrontation. We see him reinforce this notion with his own thoughts: " All my life needed was a sense of someplace to go. I don't believe that one should devote his life towards morbid self-attention. I believe that someone should become a person like other people. During his first break from work we see him walk into an X-rated movie theatre and approach a concession stand worker. However, instead of the usual refreshment request we would expect, we see him attempt to act upon his earlier musings by introducing himself then repeatedly asking for her name. Although from an objective point of view one can't deny that his demands were creepy and unwanted, it's unfortunate that what he thought was a genuine act of friendliness was met with a brusque retaliation.

He's intentionally dressed in the same dull beige military jacket we've seen him use during his night shifts, and although that jacket may have once been

Interpreted as a symbol of national pride, it now hangs on him as a reminder that he is now a washed-up war veteran looking to add some color to his life. It is solely through coincidence that Travis managed to secure a date with Betsy (Sybil Shepherd). After staring at her through her office window from his cab for an uncomfortably long time, he works up the nerve to approach her the next morning.

In this scene the dull beige is still prevalent in his pants, but this time Hess is now wearing a red blazer, suggesting that he hasn't given up on finding passion. His lines to her are incredibly direct and intense, imposing his analysis on her of why she wants to go UT with him before actually asking her out to lunch. His offbeat persuasion is intriguing, and Betsy can't really be blamed for accepting his offer. "I don't think I've ever met anyone quite like you", she says. His strange charisma even carries through to the end of the meal and into the next date.

We can finally see him starting to show signs of passion as he buys her a red blazer. Everything goes well right up to the point where he stops her at a theatre playing a dirty movie. She reluctantly enters and tries to watch, but is repulsed by what she sees and storms off, never to talk to Travis again. Once more, while it can't be denied that objectively his actions were dubious, he merely intended to place them both in an intimate situation so they could grow closer. Since he's never felt loved before, taking her to a pornographic movie was most likely the only method he thought he could produce such an emotion.

After she angrily storms off, he is visibly distraught, and it should be noted that he never wears the red blazer again. Red can also be perceived as aggression and danger, and it is seen in this way when we first learn of Travis' mental instability. One night during his usual routine, he picks up an angry black man who commands him to park on the sidewalk and let the meter run. Low-key lighting is used in this scene to enhance the suspicious atmosphere. His authoritative demeanor makes Travis uneasy. He then demands Travis to look up through a window at a figure of a woman, whom he claims is his wife.

With a sinister smile on his face, the black man tells Travis that he is carrying a gun and proceeds to describe his plans to mutilate then kill her for seeing another man. Powerless to stop him, Travis sadly listens in silence. Later that night, Travis wants to confide in his fellow cab driver Wizard (Peter Bayle) about the confrontation that transpired earlier, and pulls him aside. However, he is at a loss of words to describe his frustration at the unchecked corruption that goes on in New York City and his own inability to deal with it. In the end, he speaks using ambiguities.

Wizard tries to explain that he's been a cab driver for a long time and disappointment, helplessness, and aggravation are expected to happen in the line of work. " That happens to the best of us," he says. Travis struggles to keep his motions in check: " I just want to go out and really, really... Do something. I just really... ' got some bad ideas. " The entire conversation takes place outside of a cafe©, with a neon sign splashing an overpowering shade of red across the entire scene. This lighting coupled with Travis'

watery eyes sends a clear message that Travis snapped, is about to do something violent to release his contained anger.

The following days find Travis with a morbid sense of clarity; he visits a weapons salesman and purchases four expensive guns, repeatedly tests all of them out at a UN range, tirelessly works on building his own equipment to access his guns easier, and he diligently works out. In addition to his change in lifestyle, he also forgoes the old beige jacket for a green one. This is the first time in the film seeing the green jacket: it is a distinct mark of Travis' renewal of self and newfound vigor, and it is the jacket he chooses to conceal his weaponry in.

In the mirror in his room we see him practicing drawing his guns from the hidden holsters. Muff talking to me? Well I'm the only one here", he says to himself. It is an important turning point in Travis' life: he's mom to the realization that although people surround him every day, he is ultimately alone and will never be accepted by society. Between the two dates that Travis had with Betsy, Travis had the privilege of chauffeuring Senator Charles Palatine (Leonard Harris), who was running for President, to a conference.

Charles had asked Travis what about America bugs him the most, to which he responded that it was the people itself that was the problem: this whole mess, he should just flush it right down the toilet. " At the time, Travis strongly supported Charles, thinking that as someone of power he would use his authority to cleanse New York City of its violence and sleaze. However, Travis eventually realizes that Charles is most likely going to overlook a large

problem that has been festering for an extended period of time and should be dealt with immediately.

In his own mind, he understands that if New York City is to be devoid of corruption, he must be the one to take care of it. One night when Travis is driving he encounters Iris Code Foster), a twelve year-old prostitute walking down the sidewalk. She tries to make an escape by climbing into the back seat of the cab, but is pulled back. Despite going to adult theaters to watch seedy films, he immediately is repulsed by the prospect of a girl, barely out of childhood, surviving by selling her own body.

Desperate to do anything to help improve the community, he finds her later again and arranges to meet her again, with the intent to persuade her to quit prostitution. They meet the next day for breakfast and Travis becomes obsessed with helping her return to her parents' home, sending her money attached to a letter stating he will soon be dead. The climax of the film shows Travis with a new look. He no longer wants to fit into society because it doesn't take measures to correct itself, so this is the first time he's seen with a Mohawk and wearing shades, along with the green military jacket.

Finally released from his powerlessness, he has no problems confronting the people that he felt responsible for the injustice in the community. He first attempts to assassinate Charles at his inauguration speech, although it fails because a Secret Service representative recognizes him. Desperate to change the community, he persists in his vigilantism until he manages to save Iris from her pimp Sport (Harvey Kite) by killing him and his manager

right in front of her. Taxi Driver can be viewed as Travis' pitiful series of unfortunate attempts to connect with others.