

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

Final Director Visual Bible v1

Internal Production Reference PDF

- Built from final v7 screenplay + department policies.
- Purpose: protect tone, visual grammar, and production co

How To Use This Bible

- Director/DP: read Framework, Shot Blueprints, key environments
- Production Design: prioritize Camp/Chamber/Shaft files + Motifs
- VFX: follow VFX Philosophy + Entity Rules + Chamber/Turnaround
- Edit/Sound: use Signature Motifs + Shot Blueprints + Isolation

Global Visual North Star

- Build a controlled, premium cosmic-horror language where
- Horror is epistemic first (what is learned), not attack-driven
- Visual precision always wins over "cool chaos" or arbitrary
- Opening and closing image grammar must mirror each other
- Frame humans as small process variables inside large integrated systems
- Keep geometry readable even in fear-heavy scenes.
- Use silence and low-frequency hum as system-state indicators

Global Key Frames & Tone Control

- KF-01: White void aerial, tiny helicopter, distorted signal, noise
- KF-02: Corridor contact at Camp D1, wrong-normal order, lighting
- KF-03: Iteration chamber reveal, rows first, people second
- KF-04: Isolationsraum mirror close, pupil shift, procedural
- KF-05: Closing aerial mirror with `STATUS: ITERATION AKTIV`
- Practical: Snow, wind, camp props, corridor texture, actor-robot
- VFX: Depth extension, subtle living-material micro-motion
- Exterior: low-contrast cold whites with directional wind streaks
- Camp: practical motivated pools, darker corners that keep

Protagonist Visual: Dr. Elias Keller

- Present Keller as a control-driven scientist whose grief slo
- Keller never plays as an action hero silhouette.
- Inner conflict must be readable in micro-behavior before
- His final ambiguity (accepted vs replaced) must remain un
- KF-01: Helicopter interior, photo of son, muted side light.
- KF-02: Notebook insert ("verstehe" crossed into "beweise"
- KF-03: Subtle blood trace after registration moment.
- Act I: neutral cool key, clean facial planes.
- Act II: harder side ratio, deeper orbit shadows under eye.

Protagonist Visual: Dr. Lena Hartmann

- Frame Hartmann as the film's ethical optics system, reading her choices.
- Hartmann's authority is observational precision, not volume.
- Her choices must feel active, not reactive.
- She is the first reliable witness of Keller's instability marked by her choice.
- KF-01: glance from son photo to Keller.
- KF-02: covert glove bagging after blood trace.
- KF-03: measured look during pupil anomaly.
- Cooler fill values than Keller for objective contrast.
- Side-lit profile in diagnostic scenes to emphasize analytical precision.

Protagonist Visual: Ensemble Dynamics

- Make each ensemble member visually legible as a distinct character.
- Ensemble blocking must communicate fracture over time.
- Utility props are identity signals, not decoration.
- Team shape changes after Alvarez loss must be immediate.
- KF-01: full six-person configuration at Camp D1 entry.
- KF-02: split attention around corridor contact.
- KF-03: borehole edge debate under weather clock.
- Shared practical key with subtle character-specific edge reactions.
- More negative fill as hierarchy breaks down.

Environment: Antarctic Surface

- Use the surface world as scale-negation space where human scale is negated.
- Surface frames must communicate orientation loss before scale.
- Helicopter scale must stay modest, never heroic.
- Opening/closing aerial language must match structurally.
- KF-01: opening aerial void with tiny black helicopter.
- KF-02: Camp D1 landing in blown snow haze.
- KF-03: borehole perimeter in low-contrast morning grey.
- Overcast diffuse key, low shadow separation.
- Avoid rich blue skies; preserve muted polar tonality.
- Act I opening: horizon intentionally unstable or absent.

Environment: Camp D1 (Wrong Normal)

- Present Camp D1 as "wrong normal" architecture where p
- Camp should feel active-adjacent, not abandoned-ruin.
- Every room must imply previous methodical action.
- Corridor contact scene must read as measurement, not at
- KF-01: first entry into ordered but empty main module.
- KF-02: wall protocol drawings under controlled flashlight
- KF-03: black wall substance pulse and retreat.
- Day interiors: practical cool utility lighting with dead zone
- Night interiors: red-emergency accents plus narrow flashl
- Cleanly stacked gloves and tools left in usable order.

Environment: Borehole + Vertical

- Make the descent space the physical lock of the narrative
- Verticality must be felt before the collapse happens.
- Point-of-no-return moment must be geographically unnamed
- Depth should read as engineered void, not cave randomness
- KF-01: borehole edge in morning grey with team ring.
- KF-02: cable depth feed with no floor return.
- KF-03: top-down shaft void with diminishing light.
- Surface: overcast diffused light with low-contrast skin rendering
- Shaft: fast falloff to darkness with practical lamps as depth markers

Environment: Alien Structure Tun

- Stage the tunnels as active engineered anatomy where space is defined by function.
- Tunnel geometry must read intentional and repeatable.
- Material behavior remains subtle, never fantasy-biological.
- Forward movement should feel like entering a protocol, not a hallway.
- KF-01: first tunnel reveal from shaft floor.
- KF-02: moving beam across fibrous black surface.
- KF-03: low-frequency wall response near system event.
- Keep practical beam cones narrow and motivated.
- Preserve heavy negative space without losing orientation.

Environment: Iteration Chamber +

- Deliver the film's central ontological shock through control.
- Chamber reveal must be staged in steps, never as one total.
- Bodies read as archived series, not gore tableau.
- Archive wall contact is the perception rupture pivot.
- KF-01: rows in darkness before identity recognition.
- KF-02: first clear human silhouette in preserved state.
- KF-03: near-human variation contrast frame.
- Low ambient baseline with hard practical beam sculpting.
- Keep eye adaptation effect through dark-to-detail reveal.
- Step 1: Reihen-Geometrie (pattern before meaning).

Environment: Isolation + Final Loop

- End with procedural chill where institutional control and communication is the final statement.
- Isolation spaces must feel administratively clean, not dramatic or mysterious.
- Final loop must directly echo opening image architecture.
- End cards must read as machine-state communication, not narrative.
- KF-01: Hartmann signing institutional statement.
- KF-02: Keller isolated in white room with recorder.
- KF-03: mirror approach and pupil event.
- Corridor: broad flat white with minimal shadow personalization.
- Room: similarly flat, with slight eye catchlight control for reflection.

Shot Blueprint: Opening Aerial / D

- SHOT 01: EXT WIDE aerial / static hold / white void scale down
- SHOT 02: EXT WIDE aerial / slow drift / helicopter enters frame
- SHOT 03: EXT MED long lens / rotor against wind streak /
- SHOT 04: INT cockpit insert / analog signal unit / static before
- SHOT 05: INT close on Keller profile / no dialogue / listening
- SHOT 06: INT radio speaker macro / distortion texture increasing
- SHOT 07: EXT aerial oblique / horizon instability / orientation
- SHOT 08: INT instrument insert / distorted voice fragment
- SHOT 09: INT reaction split / team silent lock / deep hum
- SHOT 10: EXT transition wide / helicopter continues forward

Shot Blueprint: Vertical Shaft Colla

- SHOT 01: EXT top-down wide / full team at borehole edge
- SHOT 02: INSERT cable monitor / depth feed unstable / no
- SHOT 03: POV down shaft / beam swallowed by darkness
- SHOT 04: MED on descent team / rope tension increases.
- SHOT 05: INSERT anchor hardware / micro-vibration and i
- SHOT 06: CLOSE Baranov/Sato / recognition beat before f
- SHOT 07: EXT edge profile / structural shear and ice plate
- SHOT 08: WIDE collapse read / entry geometry changes c
- SHOT 09: CLOSE on blocked rim / debris lock / "return pat
- SHOT 10: MED Keller command beat / forward-only decis

Shot Blueprint: Iteration Chamber

- SHOT 01: TUNNEL EXIT wide / chamber darkness with rows
- SHOT 02: MED move-in / beam cuts first line geometry (p
- SHOT 03: INSERT silhouette in frost / first human form rec
- SHOT 04: REACTION close Keller/Hartmann / cognitive he
- SHOT 05: lateral pass / near-human variation appears in s
- SHOT 06: WIDE depth read / serial structure extends beyo
- SHOT 07: CLOSE on son-like profile in chamber / denial be
- SHOT 08: TRACK to archive wall / surface relief starts micr
- SHOT 09: HAND CONTACT insert / wall activation and hum
- SHOT 10: SUBJECTIVE rupture montage / data not image.

Signature Motifs Continuity Matrix

- Son photo -> Helicopter intro (`#2`) -> From memory obj
- Notebook / protocol writing -> Early control behavior (`#1`)
- Cyan measurement accent -> Camp diagnostics (`#7`, `#1`)
- Mirror image -> Isolation room setup (`#34`) -> Identity c
- Status cards -> Institutional process layer (`#34`) -> Human
- Distorted signal + deep hum -> Opening unknown cue (`#1`)

VFX Philosophy Policy (Practical-F

- Protect the film's clinical tone by defining where VFX serve
- Practical-first execution in all actor-proximate zones.
- VFX is a scale and continuity tool, not a style replacement
- Every VFX event must preserve geographic readability and
- Use practical snow/wind/props and near-surface structures
- Reserve VFX for depth, extension, subtle system behavior,
- Enforce early asset lock and shot-level intent notes before
- Practical:
- Snow, wind, rotor interaction, costume contamination, he

Entity Behavior Rule Set

- Define strict behavior grammar so entities remain procedurally predictable
- Entities are evaluators/operators, never rage-driven hunters
- Movement reads measured and purposeful at all times.
- Interaction priority is sensing/comparing/classifying, not killing
- Zone 1 — Observe (>6m): silhouette + hum presence, no contact
- Zone 2 — Measure (2–6m): slow calibrated approach, one step at a time
- Zone 3 — Contact (<2m): sensor/forehead contact → immediate response
- Stage entity beats as controlled interventions with clear outcomes
- Keep distance logic consistent (observe -> approach -> measure)
- Use silence and low-frequency system tones as primary primary communication

Diagram: Spatial Map (Camp to Camp)

SPATIAL MAP: CAMP D1 -> CAMP E1

Top-down flow + vertical transition cue



Diagram: Act Visual Compression

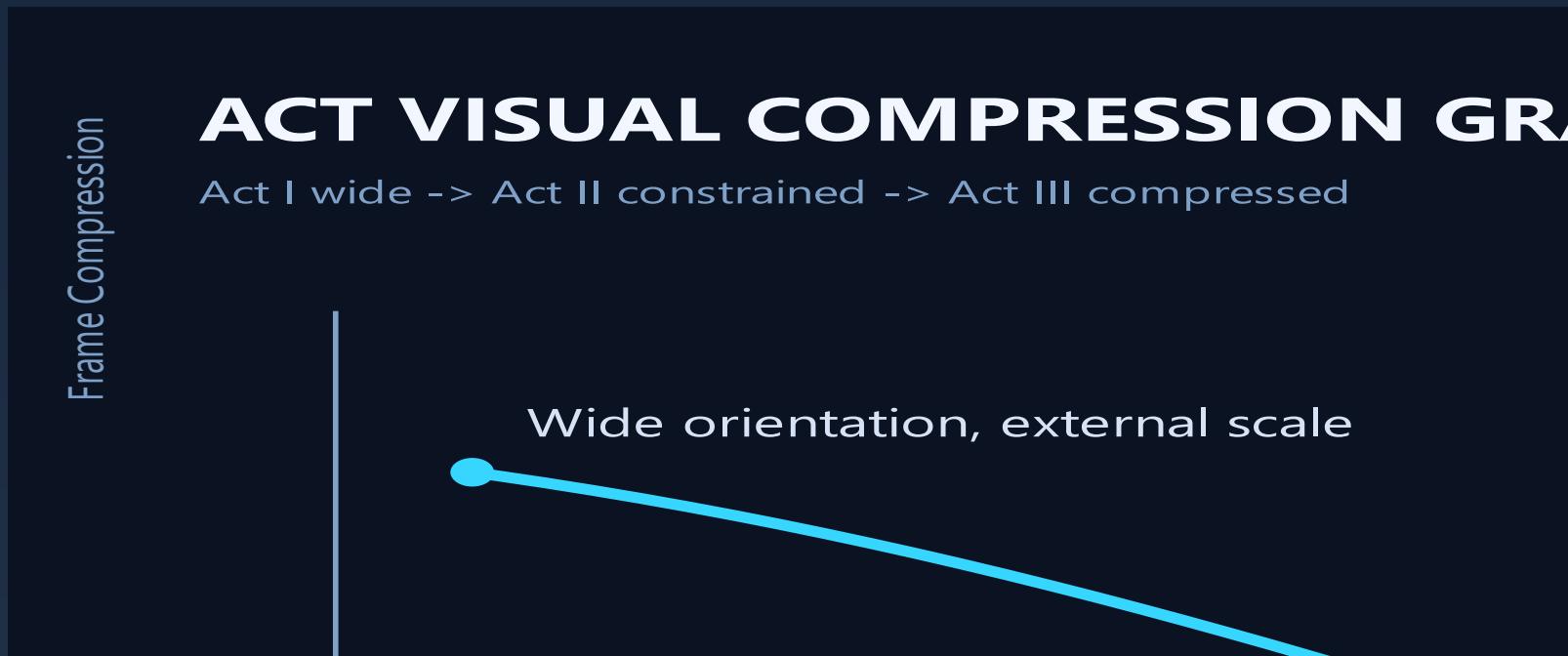


Diagram: Master Palette Strip

PALETTE STRIP (v7 Visual Policy)

Use as shared reference across production design, grading, and VFX.

Appendix: Department File Map

- Director/DP: 00, 20, 11-16, 23, compression diagram.
- Production Design: 12-16, spatial map, palette strip.
- VFX: 22, 23, 13-15.
- Edit/Sound: 21, 20, 16, 23.

Final Note

- This bible is a drift-control system: tone, scale, and behavior
- If a choice increases spectacle but reduces meaning clarity