

Creative Venture 2: Evaluative Report

In this report, I will be analysing three specialists in the area of Production Design. I will be exploring the patterns in each of their own development from an emerging talent into leaders in their field. The three specialists I will be studying are Rick Carter, Stuart Craig and Catherine Martin.

I start this essay with my first specialist, Rick Carter who is a Oscar-winning production designer. Carter was born in 1952 and grew up in Los Angeles. During the late 1960's where America were at war with Vietnam, Carter was a conscientious objector as he did not believe in the war. Instead, he dropped out of University of California where he studied and went travelling for over a year to try and make a better life for himself. He had the chance to work within the film industry before he went on his travels due to his father who was a publicist for the actor Jack Lemmon but Carter didn't believe at the time that he wanted to take the opportunity. After a year of travelling, Carter went to New York to try to make his way of becoming a portrait painter as he claims that it is one of the best things that he enjoys the most. With his love of art, Carter took the opportunity that his dad offered to go back to Los Angeles to work in the Art Department to fulfil his life time ambition. Like any newcomer, Carter started off in the business young and had the fear of not knowing enough to achieve when he's being asked to do. To overcome this fear, he had the experience by working on Hal Ashby's *Bound for Glory* (1976), followed by James Bridges' *The China Syndrome* (1979) as an assistant. After all of his hard work in making a name of himself, the director of *Bound for Glory*, Hal Ashby invited him back to work on another feature film again on *Second-Hand Hearts* (1981) where Carter has earned his first credit as an Art Director. Carter's next feature as an Art Director was on *The Goonies* (1985), which was a important and crucial job for the designer, as it led to another door opening. This is where he had first met Steven Spielberg who was the writer and producer of the film. The way Carter presented himself throughout this film caught Spielberg attention and he was very interested in the way he worked. From then onwards, the future looked bright for Carter as the two bonded well and began a close friendship where he had worked on Spielberg's Television series *Amazing Stories* (1985-87). This also led to an unexpected meeting with Robert Zebecks which resulted in working with him and Spielberg for the next 20 years. Together, they went on to make big production feature films which Carter was involved with making of the films such as *Back To The Future Part II and Part III* (1989 and 1990), *Jurassic Park* and its first sequel *The Lost World* (1993 and 1997), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Cast Away* (2000), *The Polar Express* (2004), and *War of the Worlds* (2005). Carter then took on his most challenging project yet to date working up to three years on the ground breaking production of *Avatar* (2009). To end his career on a high, Carter has been nominated twice for an Academy Award. The first is with his work on *Forrest Gump* and then the second is with the highly success film *Avatar*, where he had won the Oscar in 2010 for Best Art Direction.

The reason why I have chosen Carter as my first specialist is because he is renowned for Production Design on few of my favourite films including *Jurassic Parks*, *Back To The Future*, *Forrest Gump* and *Avatar*. There is a pattern with all the films he has worked on and that is with the same genre which is Adventure. This shows with his connection with Spielberg and Zebeck, they are inspired by Carter's work with his creative design on set to make the film feel the adventure genre for the audience. From studying about his life from having no interest within the film industry to end up making a career on Production Design working on big production films and great achievements winning an Oscar for his hard work. For reason about his work and what he has achieved inspires me to expect the unexpected and take the opportunities I get.

The second specialist I focus on is one of Britain's best Production Designers, Stuart Craig. Born in 1942 in Norwich, Craig is well known for his astonishing work on all of the *Harry Potter* films. As a young grammar school student, Craig was gifted with a skilful talent of his artistic side of painting and drawing but never thought he would become successful with a career from his creative talents. Age 13 is when Craig started his interest where he had volunteered at a local theatre in Norwich on a Gilbert and Sullivan Production. Craig's skilful talent of painting the Tower of London for the set, caught attention by the producer who praised Craig with compliments of his work. Craig took the

compliments forward believing in himself that he could achieve great things for the talent he has. He decided to enrol at the Royal College of Art to study a Film and Television course which he started architecture by designing sets, locations, buildings and rooms. After graduating from College, Craig was one of the lucky ones to land his first job in the film industry as an art assistant on Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale* (1967) which starred Woody Allen and Orson Welles. With that opportunity as a first job as a young graduate, is the best position to be in knowing that Craig has worked and pushed hard for this moment. After his hard work, Craig continued his career by working on numerous films as a production designer such as *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Gandhi* (1982) and *The English Patient* (1996). From 2001-2011, Craig's main focus has been on the wonderful world of Harry Potter. This opportunity for Craig came around while he was decorating his grandson's bedroom where he unexpectedly got a phone call to fly to America to meet Chris Columbus who was the first director of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001). Craig has worked from the beginning to the end of every successful Harry Potter movie which were all made in 10 years. Within those years of his success as a production designer on Harry Potter, in 2003, Craig was awarded the O.B.E by the Queen in honour for his services to the film industry. In 2009 and 2010, at Universal Studios Theme Park in Florida and Warner Brothers Studio Tour London, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter opened where Craig was head of the design team. Before the attraction opened at Universal in 2007, J.K. Rowling requested Craig to be part of the Universal Creative team as she loved the look of the films and believed he would bring the imagination to life. To this date, the magical world at both attractions are still very popular for tourists to visit. Craig then moved to working on *The Legend of Tarzan* (2016) bring a animation film into life, shortly followed working on *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016) and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* (2018). The Fantastic Beasts is a spin-off to the Harry Potter films which is produced and written by J.K.Rowling. Craig's connections with Harry Potter had him secure a position as a production designer for both of these films to bring the fantasy film to life like with his previous work. With the achievements, Craig has won 3 Academy Awards for *Gandhi*, *Dangerous Liaisons* and *The English Patient*, and three BAFTA Awards for *The Elephant Man*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Harry Potter is another favourite movie of mine as I am always drawn into the imagination of a magical universe filled with witches and wizards every time I watch the films just because of how each set is dressed, buildings/locations, props and costumes used. To work on a fantasy genre has always been a dream of mine, so for Craig to be apart of them all for the last 18 years is extremely incredible. Studying about his life sets great example and motivation for myself and others who want to fulfil a career in something they are passionate for. By working hard and making yourself known will hopefully get you recognised and far in the future. He has entered the film industry by a different approach compared to Rick Carter as he studied a course at college which led him to his first job as an art assistant.

Final specialist that I focus on is Catherine Martin who was born in 1965 in Lindfield Sydney. Martin is a costume, set and production designer, and latterly a film producer. During her career, Martin has won four Academy Awards, two in 2002 with *Moulin Rouge!* and two in 2013 with *The Great Gatsby*. This incredible achievement make's her Australia's most awarded Oscar winner. Before Martin became successful, she studied at North Sydney Girls High School and worked at the Roseville Theatre. Whilst working at the Roseville, she began to focus on costume and design. Martin went on to Sydney College of the Arts where she studied visual arts. During her time at College, Martin had worked very closely with fellow student Baz Luhrmann who is now her husband. This started when in 1988 after finishing her diploma, she worked full time as a designer on '*Lake Lost*' by Luhrmann's Theatre Production. Thanks to the success of this, she went on to design on all of Luhrmann's Production for 20 years including, '*A Diary of a Madman*' and '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*'. In 1992, Martin worked on the film *Strictly Ballroom* with her husband and won Best Costume Design and Best Production Design at the AFI and BAFTA Awards. Following on from this achievement, she had similar success in 1996 with William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where she won another BAFTA for Best Production Design. Martin third feature film the highly acclaimed *Moulin Rouge!* earned her two Academy Awards for Best Costume Design and Best Art Direction. Martin continued to work within the film industry on her next project film *Australia* (2008) directed by her husband, starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh

Jackman. This project led her to nomination for her fourth Oscar but unfortunately she was unsuccessful. Since then, Martin has been busy working on eight short films in 2012 including *The Surreal Body* and *The Exotic Body*, alongside working with top fashion magazines and brands including Vogue, Glamour Magazine and Tiffany & Co with her creative designs. Martin's final Academy Awards came in 2013 when she had achieved Best Costume and Best Production Design for *The Great Gatsby*, *having inspired audiences with her incredible 1920's design*. In total, Martin has won an astonishing 42 awards in her career for her outstanding costume and set designs.

By choosing Martin as one my specialist is showing that she is one of my inspirations. Showing her success with every single piece of theatre, plays and films she has worked on paying off by winning award after award. I feel that she has had an advantage in her career by marrying a famous direction. With this has giving her a step up the ladder but ongoing acclaim will only ever be achieved by an individuals sheer talent and determination to succeed.

In conclusions, having studied these three individuals who have all taken different routes in the industry, I have tried to look for similar patterns in the ways they have achieved success. Whilst they have all come from different beginnings, ultimately they have achieved similar acclaim within the industry. It is interesting to note that there are obvious elements of luck as well as huge talent involved in the success of all three. They have all clearly taken risks and gambles in their careers that have paid off. From a recent phone call, I have taken a risk from an opportunity offered to be a trainee in the art department to work on series 4 of 'The Crown' at Elstree studios in London over the summer. Taking this chance could potentially open doors in the future.