

How did I get here??

In my living room as I compose this cover letter, I see my year 12 high school painting that was 1 of 50 selected for the ARTEXPRESS travelling exhibit with entries from across Australia.

I have always, always cherished great design.

After Art School and then Teachers College just north in Newcastle I was engaged as a high school Visual and performing arts teacher in the tough turf of the western suburbs of Sydney. I was young and at the time searching for my calling. This wasn't it at that time! I knocked on doors of established Production Designers and I will always remember who answered and set the destiny of my life on the first hard day at the Balmain Power station. It was on set assisting props in the dust with a bunch of arrogant extras. After an incredibly long first day I didn't want to go home, I was set. I'd found my career and set my sights to do whatever it took to be a Production Designer!

I worked for a couple of years in Sydney decorating and propping commercials and TV series. I drew, I drafted, spent hours painting, raked lawns and silked flowers. I learned from great scenic and carpenters and broadened my broad Art Department skills immensely. I Art Directed smaller TVC's that grew as I gained experience. I engaged a booking service; I was in demand. At that time many US commercial companies were coming to Sydney to film and one of those took me back to Los Angeles with them with an offer I could not refuse.

In Los Angeles in the late 80's I established myself quickly within the African American community Production Designing music Videos for NWA, Snoop Dog, TLC and Dr. Dre among others. My music video Directors became film Directors and repeated collaborations with these true craftspeople who appreciated my Design and now realized textures and colours were available to darker toned skins rather than their audience watching just eyes and teeth dance across the screen. Of all my memories abroad the priceless moments I shared struggling to make these budgets achievable are some of my proudest moments of all. I have stories of how an Art Dept enriched the lives of locals and changed a community for the better. To me these were amazing times.

In a parallel landscape I worked with Madonna, Pink Floyd, Santana and Bruce Springsteen and followed their directors on a journey into the TV commercial world travelling across the world multiple times on private Lear jets Designing commercials and industrials for the US market. These were the big budget 90's and I was entrenched in Hollywood and New York Designing for the best of the best of the US Production houses.

It wasn't long that I realised that anything I Designed was greatly enhanced by DOP's that were lighting conscious. I toured with the Pink Floyd's acclaimed Lighting Designer in 1994 and continued my relationship with this high-end crew to light the films sets for the next feature I Designed for the third time with a Director Producer duo who were the first African American Harvard Lawyers who parleyed into their passion, film. I had been repeat hired by the same dedicated producer / director team 3 times now. I've also collaborated with the same Producer 7 times since then so I must have been doing something right and repeat hires always spoke volumes when I was on the search for crew.

I was engaged as the sole Production Designer to 12 highly acclaimed DOP's and still photographers for their projects with the inaugural release of Kodak's Vision film stock upon its worldwide release.

I had formed a company by this time, and I retained a crew to oversee many smaller projects while I personally attended to the more demanding roles. I brought back from rubble and designed the amazing 'Gothic Theatre' in Denver Colorado then shifted my attention Designing a feature film with a Wall Street New York Production Office. I spent countless hours commuting back and forth from LA to NY for MTV, VH1 and Nickelodeon between 'long form' projects and travelled widely for their various productions.

I jumped back and forth over many years from larger budget more mainstream projects to where my passion really lay in the grit of the street films from the culture I so admired and the many life-long colleagues / friends I've cemented along the way.

Though I still own property in Hollywood and Ohio (that's another story) I returned to Sydney in 2000. I was in LA wrapping a large project while the TV was showing the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics. I was amazed that no one else in the room 'got it'. The Designers corrugated iron, hills hoists, thongs and Victa mowers capitated me and there I was back in Sydney at the closing ceremony just days later soaking up the local design flavours I'd missed from such a great city for far too long.

I fell into the commercial world here interspersed with a yearly voyage back to the US to Production Design another film. By Now Los Angeles had become a place we all lived and met then went way to film. One show was in Oregon another Atlanta a few took me to Capetown. I stopped in at Istanbul, Athens, all through West Africa, London, Paris and of course New York again many times. It seemed I lived in planes though gone were the days of one phone on the bulkhead. I was on a plane on 911 and diverted to Honolulu for 9 days designing my first job remotely, I was always so hands on, fast forward to covid times and here we are all over again....

During an epiphany moment in 2014 I felt the time was right and wanted to give back. I rekindled my teacher's qualification and as the proud Dad of a 4-year-old took on the role of a High School Visual Art Teacher. Wow such a change but how great were the hours! So many moments of seeing the faces of children light up was truly an honour. I'd spent decades with adults mastering and mentoring the aspects of Design from conception to completion and here I was in a room of mixed ability kids who'd been almost starved of any Art or Design yet seeing their faces come alive witnessing their very own creations. It was the same feeling that overcame me every time I saw my Design come alive through the magic of celluloid. I couldn't decide, for the last 8 years I've been a teacher and still regularly taken the ride to revisit Production Design on Features films, commercials and Miniseries. My Last US based Feature was Contagion and parked in Hong Kong for 10 months, here I have found comfort back at home, in Sydney continuing my film career that I've always loved though now enhancing that with Education. I have found the Holy Grail!

I feel my next chapter as the Production Design Lead at AFTRS would afford me personal growth that I have always yearned. The position would allow my love to mentor and nurture others to blossom and the creative juices I've had since birth would be quenched by the collaboration with fresh emerging talent that abounds just waiting to be unearthed. I am aware of just how greatly skilled these recent graduates are

My membership to the Los Angeles Art Directors Guild dates to 1993 having risen the ranks and passed all required assessments to be allowed that title. I am also a proud member of the

Australian Production Designers Guild (ADPDG) as well as the Teachers Federation of NSW. Above all this and in addition to my qualifications I also carry an abundance of priceless life experience that has proven invaluable to my teachings and mentorship. From when I first made cold calls to anyone who'd listen to allow me to enter the world of the Art Department and follow my quest to the top. I have become one of the premier Art Directors and Productions Designers with a collection of visual amazement that spans 35 most glorious years.