Introduction

As we approach the end of the second decade of the 21st century, we bear witness to a diversity of screen production practices that continue to evolve on a global stage. While linear productions continue to dominate mainstream conversations around cultural production, more and more breakthrough examples of innovative screen production experiences are appearing. Developments in streaming technology and improvements in internet infrastructure are delivering increasingly frictionless, choose-your-own-adventure style narratives to mobile and larger domestic screens. These interactive story experiences, which have their antecedents in novels with multiple endings and then CD-ROM-based branching narratives, were trialed for television through children's content such as the Netflix series, *The Adventures of Puss in Boots* (2015-18). More recently, the form has been taken to another level with the *Bandersnatch* episode of *Black Mirror* (2011--), also on Netflix, requiring invention across all stages of the production process in order that the program could be realised (Rubin 2018).

It seems that the age of the autonomous screen work may be waning, with content creators now highly aware they are creating experiences which need to be activated by an audience. Evolving funding models, different screen types, shifting viewing patterns and fragmenting audiences necessitate new approaches to content creation that rethink what the screen work can be, as well as how, when, where and to whom it can be delivered. This book provides insights into such contemporary screen production practices, interrogating a diversity of approaches to moving-image making where, in reality, no one-size fits all. Targeted at both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the book covers all aspects of the screen production journey. It comprises 32 chapters by authors from Australia, the US, the UK and Europe, and given its strong grounding in creative practice research, has been designed as an essential creative-critical guide for those studying and teaching the production of screen content - fact, fiction and everything in between.

An underpinning premise of the book is that of creative agency – from a screen practitioner's point of view, how their role is influenced by the roles played by others, and how they act as a mediator or interpreter of screen ideas in collective pursuit of the production of a screen work. In this way, the chapters promote a strong pedagogy of collaboration and respect for others, which can often be a challenge for screen and media production education. This

premise also represents the fluid and connected ecology of making a screen work that faces us in today's industry, in an increasingly democratised and networked world where notions of the 'auteur' are problematic . We thus propose the practice of screen production in this way:

The creation and mediation of screen ideas for intended audiences, enacted by individual practitioners who work collaboratively and connectedly on a shared journey to transform ideas, concepts and words into images and sounds for consumption as screen products.

Key to the fabric of this book is the combination of theory and practice. This is not a screen studies book; nor is it a how-to book: it is a critically informed and intellectually rich guide to screen production, shaped by the needs of students and educators working in higher education environments where 'doing' and 'thinking' co-exist. Research thus features heavily in the book, contributing to international developments in research about, for and through creative practice (see Batty and Kerrigan, 2018). While such developments have been prominent in disciplines such as art, design and creative writing, in screen production they have generally been less present. With this book, then, we aim to fill an important gap in the creative-critical nexus, while also clearly providing a robust account of screen production practices for future content creators.

What is screen production?

Screen production incorporates all forms and genres, as well as various stages of the creative process, from ideation and development to actual production and distribution. Screen production activities include the creation, production and distribution of 'screen ideas' (Macdonald 2013), through fiction and non-fiction feature films, short films and web series, television and multi-platform screen works. Films and screen works as cultural products might be more identifiable when described as Hollywood blockbusters, socially responsible documentaries, commercially entertaining television series, screen-based advertising, digital and social media forms such as YouTube, and avant garde and experimental films. This book incorporates and analyses all of these types, using research *into* practice and research *through* practice, including many insights from practice-based/led researchers. It delves deep into the creation process and explains what filmmakers, screenwriters and multi-platform practitioners do as they embark on producing culturally and commercially engaging screen works.

We have found, in our own creative practices, teaching experiences and in compiling this book, that there is considerable blurring between the various stages of screen production. Perhaps intensified by the affordances of digital methods, the path to exhibition is rarely linear and more often the approach is iterative, with the matrix of creative choices impacting on outcomes. Recent definitions of screen production have offered four stages of the journey from screen idea to screen work: conceptualisation, development, production and reception (see Kerrigan 2016). These stages theoretically appear as being linear and discrete, but in practice they are messy with considerable blurring of boundaries, and with overlapping stages that occur throughout the ideation, development, production and distribution process. As a consequence, earlier production decisions may need to be revisited and revised as each screen production project develops the reality of contemporary software, and as hardware provides opportunities for the screen producer to refine and re-work their screen ideas through the stages of production.

The contemporary screen producer understands these opportunities. As such, what appears to be a waterfall model of production is in reality an iterative and recursive process that continues to tolerate the traditional film scheduling labels of development, pre-production, production, post production and exhibition, because they persist and provide an effective starting point and organising principle through which to consider the complex interaction of contexts, creativity, practicalities and audiences involved in producing screen-based media.

An appreciation of the fluid nature of the stages of screen production allows a more sophisticated analysis of them, as well as a recognition that each stage can be expanded further into various sub-stages where additional stakeholders exist, such as the script re-write and the script consultant; the production manager, the editor and the composer; and the cinema, gallery or online programmer or curator. Such fluidity can also be seen to benefit thinking around the timing of input from key creatives. Rather than approaching craft roles as siloed, discrete and confined to only specific parts of a schedule, there are opportunities to add nuance and complexity through the interrelatedness of a range of aesthetic and practical choices when key crew from across the stages of production have input on how their specialisation can deepen or enrich the overall vision through a process of creative

collaboration. It is these stages and sub-stages, as well as the wide variety of stakeholders involved in a screen production, that this book explores. The international case studies and personal experiences offer new insights and definitions in a way we hope will be appealing to students and educators at various levels of the Higher Education sector, with varied experiences and expectations.

Screen production scholarship

Scholarship around screen production, namely that which focuses on creative practice, has increased over the past five years, particularly in Australia. Following disciplines such as art and design, performance, music and creative writing, there have been many journal special issues, edited collections and monographs that discuss aspects of screen production through an academic lens, which for those studying and working in universities and colleges is a welcome addition to discourse. Popular journals such as *Media, Practice and Education* (formerly the *Journal of Media Practice*) and the *Journal of Screenwriting* have made strong efforts to build knowledge about practice-based research in the screen discipline, and this has been supplemented by innovative audio-visual and creative writing journals such as the *International Journal of Creative Media Research*, *Screenworks*, *Sightlines: Filmmaking in the Academy* and *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, which publish films and screenplays as research artefacts, usually accompanied by a supporting research statement.

Subject-based peak body associations such as the Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association (ASPERA), Europe's International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), the UK's Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) and the University Film and Video Association (UFVA) in the US have also contributed to these debates through refereed conference proceedings and reports - all of which should be investigated by students and academics in their respective regions. The rising popularity of Production Studies and Media Industries Studies has also ignited interest in the practical aspects of the discipline, though these are more often about studying production from a variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches than embracing production as a mode of research. Nevertheless, in the contemporary academy there is a

flourishing interest in blending theoretical approaches with creative practice, and as is clear from the chapters in this book, this is something we see as essential to the study of screen production at university or college level. We encourage readers to be mindful of this creative-critical journey as they work through the book, and indeed, as they work through a screen production project.

Navigating the chapters in this book

Comprising five parts, the book guides readers through the various processes of a screen production project, from initial ideas and development, to production, to exhibition and distribution. The chapters have been chosen carefully to represent key stages and milestones in the screen production ecology, and also to add new knowledge about them. The authors of the chapters span a range of cultural and professional contexts, from mainstream feature films to experimental installation works, and represent a truly international perspective. Countries of origin include Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Ireland, the US, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. Many of the chapter are co-authored, which is intended to bring a rich combination of theory and practice to the discussions being offered.

Part 1, 'Conceptualizing the screen work: ideas, intentions, contexts', explores what it means to be a screen practitioner, and how ideas, intentions and contexts shape how a screen work is conceptualized from the outset and then continually re-conceptualized throughout the life of its production. It asks questions about and provides examples of how screen practitioners can think about their work in both practical and philosophical ways, pre-development. The authors in this section consider filmmaking as creative practice to look at how initial ideas and intents are developed into treatments and scripts, and how the boundaries of screen production are being extended by new mobile and multiplatform technologies.

Part 2, 'Developing the screen work: collaboration, imagination, distillation', uses the lens of development to probe the screen work, highlighting the importance of spending time 'in development' so as to get the most out of a story idea. Through a series of case studies that examine aspects such as story research, script development and practices of collaboration with producers, editors, actors and other participants, the authors offer insights into what

contemporary development looks like, how it can be experienced, and the benefits of spending time on it. While traditional notions of development have most often referred to the redrafting of the screenplay, contemporary practices evidence an array of creative and collaborative techniques that practitioners utilise to give form to a screen idea.

In Part 3, 'Realizing the screen work: practice, process, pragmatism', the practices, processes and pragmatic decisions of screen producers underpin an exploration of what it means to make for the screen. It begins with filmmakers writing about how their practice-led research accounts for their filmmaking decisions through the creation of documentaries and feature films. This part also provides accounts from screen production researchers looking into the processes and practices around visual effects, serial television productions, advertising and the teaching of screen production. Each chapter has a specific focus that is framed by the filmmaker-researcher's speciality, which highlights the different components of working in screen production, and which explain the logistical and creative boundaries that exist for those practicing in fiction film, documentary, serial television and screen advertising.

Part 4, 'Exhibiting the screen work: places, spaces, ecologies', discusses the ecologies of exhibition and how the places, spaces and people that are involved in bringing the screen work to an audience have an impact on the way screen content is conceptualised and made. Focusing on the constellation of factors that define the particularities of exhibition outlets, the part investigates how choices around who will see, as well as where, when and how a work will be seen, influences creative decision making across the process of screen production. It covers traditional and emerging areas of screen exhibition, from film festivals and art galleries, to live cinema and the distribution of academic screen research, through to mobile devices and social media platforms that enable digital participation.

Finally, in Part 5, 'Teaching the screen work: pedagogies, practices, approaches', authors reflect on their teaching practices and recent research projects to offer insights into how screen production is being, and could be, taught. This includes a discussion of creativity and using constraints pedagogically to help students develop powerful stories; encounters between theory and practice, and how this can enhance the ability of students to make a screen work with meaning; and an examination of current screen production curricula, and

how changes in technology and the industry might influence future of teaching in the discipline. The final two chapters focus on strategies for teaching spatiality and narrative techniques for Virtual Reality production, and for teaching screenwriting through the broader lens of script and story development.

Whether you are a student or an academic, or even a general or industry reader, we hope this book provides you with a wealth of ideas, insights, frameworks, tools and advice that help with your screen production projects - creative or educational. We encourage you to work through the chapters in your own way and at your own pace, and make connections between chapters and across parts, creating a pathway for your own learning and practice. We have been inspired and enthused by the authors and their willingness to share their work, and we hope this extends to you as our reader.

References

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