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# The Palgrave Handbook of Screen Production

Craig Batty • Marsha Berry  
Kath Dooley • Bettina Frankham  
Susan Kerrigan  
Editors

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**Ben Crisp** is a screenwriter and stage and screen actor with a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Adelaide, where he also taught film studies and his thesis 'The Writer as Mapmaker' was awarded the Dean's Commendation for Doctoral Thesis Excellence. He is the recipient of the Colin Thiele Scholarship for Creative Writing and was nominated for the 2016 Western Australia Premier's Book Awards and AWGIE Awards for interactive media. His feature film screenplays have been optioned by Dancing Road Productions and Gravity Films, and he is the screenwriter and creator of the forthcoming ABC iView original comedy series *Goober*.

**Ben Crockett** is a lecturer at the School of Communication and Creative Arts (Advertising) in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). He is undertaking a PhD. Crockett has a strong industry background as a creative practitioner with 20 years' experience in the advertising industry working as an Art Director and Creative Director. He has created and been responsible for multi-million dollar campaigns that have taken him all over the world and has worked on many well-known brands such as Stella Artois, Fosters, Coca-Cola, IOC, Holden, Pacific Brands, APT, Lend Lease, AWB, Property Council of Australia and Cobb & Co to name a few. He has developed numerous TV commercials working for agencies like Grey Worldwide, OBM Advertising and The Fuel Agency.

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**Margot Nash** is a filmmaker and a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communications at UTS. She has produced, written and directed a number of award-winning films as well as working as a cinematographer and a film editor. Her credits include the experimental shorts *Shadow Panic* (1989) and *We Aim to Please* (co-filmmaker 1976), the feature documentary *For Love or Money* (co-filmmaker, 1982) and the feature dramas *Vacant Possession* (1994) and *Call Me Mum* (2005). In 2012 she was Filmmaker-in-Residence at Zürich University of the Arts where she began developing *The Silences*.

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**Martin Potter** is a director and producer of documentaries and participatory media. His focus is on facilitating work that supports marginalised communities to tell and share their stories. In addition to producing more than 20 hours of broadcast documentaries, Martin has developed and produced internationally acclaimed participatory works including SXSW award-winning *Big Stories, Small Towns* ([www.bigstories.com.au](http://www.bigstories.com.au)), *The White Building* ([www.whitebuilding.org](http://www.whitebuilding.org): Cambodia) and *Island Connect* (Sri Lanka). He researches and lectures at Deakin University, Australia, and is an Associate Investigator with the Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity and Heritage ([www.epicaustralia.org.au](http://www.epicaustralia.org.au)) and board member of EngageMedia ([engage-media.org](http://engage-media.org)).

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## INTRODUCTION

As we approach the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we bear witness to a diversity of screen production practices that continue to evolve on a global stage. While linear productions still 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 trialled 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 programme could be realised (Rubin 2018).

It seems that the age of 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 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 35 chapters by authors from Australia, the USA, 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 among 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 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 to be 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 within the reality of contemporary software, and as hardware provides opportunities for the screen producer to refine and rework 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 rewriter 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. 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 since 2014, 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 USA 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, 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 USA, 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 I, 'Conceptualising 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 conceptualised from the outset and then continually re-conceptualised throughout the life of its production. It asks questions about and provides examples of how screen practitioners can think about their work pre-development in both practical and philosophical ways.

The authors in this section consider filmmaking as a creative practice and look at how initial ideas and intentions are developed into treatments and scripts, and how the boundaries of screen production are being extended by new mobile and multi-platform technologies.

Part II, '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 III, 'Realising 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 commentaries from screen production researchers looking into the processes and practices around visual effects (VFX), 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 working in fiction films, documentaries, serial television programmes and screen advertising.

Part IV, '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, Part IV investigates how choices around who will see the work, as well as where, when and how it will be seen, influences creative decision-making throughout 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 V, '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 the future of teaching in the discipline. The final two chapters focus on strategies for teaching spatiality and narrative techniques for virtual reality (VR) production and for teaching screenwriting through the broader lens of script and story development.

Whether you are a student or an academic, or even have a general or industry background, 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 motivated by the authors and their willingness to share their work, and we hope this extends to you as our reader.

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## Conceptualising the Screen Work: Ideas, Intentions, Contexts

This part explores what it means to be a screen practitioner, and how ideas, intentions and contexts shape how a screen work is conceptualised from the outset and then continually re-conceptualised 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 part consider 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 multi-platform technologies.

The authors approach screen production as a creative practice through a variety of lenses. Some chapters within this part show how disciplines such as psychology and sociology may be drawn upon to both inform and analyse the creative processes involved in screen production. Other chapters present case studies that illuminate how an initial concept may be developed into a screen idea that may take the form of a script, a treatment or a set of experimental films that interact with a theoretical underpinning or a philosophical proposition. Conceptual development is an emerging area of study and practice and is positioned as fundamental to future screen production. The chapters in this part cover a rich array of topics, including documentary, animation, video art and poetry, and interactive storytelling.

Susan Kerrigan and Phillip McIntyre begin by providing an understanding of how a filmmaker can apply work from other disciplines to bring new insights into ways of seeing filmmaking as a creative practice. Their chapter is followed that of Diane MacLean, who considers how commissioning practices mediate and influence the conceptual development of documentary production. Stephen Sewell and Ben Crisp then provide a more pedagogical focus, exploring a framework through which screenwriters can be trained to thrive in a media ecology that is in constant flux. This pedagogical approach is continued by Michael Sergi and Craig Batty, who explore the short film form through the lens of how it can be taught and practised.

Rose Ferrell then presents a detour into the importance of the screenwriter's voice, through case studies of two of her own screenplays. By doing so, she



creates a framework for screenwriters to consider how their ‘voice’ might influence their craft. Following this, Rose Woodcock, Lienors Torre and Eiichi Tosaki delve into the world of animation and present a thoughtful and philosophical discussion of screens and movement. The focus on objects and movement is continued by Catherine Fargher, who explores the conceptual development of her interactive screen work, *The Dr Egg Adventures*.

Kim Toft Hansen and Anne Marit Waade then consider the important of screen locations in their study of Danish television drama *Arvingerne/The Legacy*. Here they argue that studying location setting and world building has implications on screen production practice. Finally, Jess Kilby and Marsha Berry write on their experiments in mobile media art to unfold evidence of how the extreme accessibility of the means of production is moving screen practice into new forms.

Collectively, these chapters show how the field of screen production has expanded in an age where the means of production are constantly changing with advances in technology. The chapters are pertinent to those who teach conceptual development to both undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts, with frameworks and methods providing a wealth of material that can be applied to different contexts and new projects.



# Creative Filmmaking Processes, Procedures and Practices: Embodied and Internalized Filmmaking Agency

*Susan Kerrigan and Phillip McIntyre*

## INTRODUCTION

Filmmakers have carried out research through specialized filmmaking roles—these include the screenwriter (Taylor 2014), director (Berkeley 2011, 2018), cinematographer (Greenhalgh 2018), editor (Pearlman 2016), documentary filmmaker (Kerrigan 2016) and fictional filmmaker (Knudsen 2016). As creative practice researchers, these filmmakers have produced highly specialized filmmaking accounts that draw on their intuitive professional industry practices described through the lens of creative practice research. These practice research accounts contribute to the broader context of filmic creativity by revealing how a filmmaker's processes are influenced by both external conventions and his or her own agency. Through a critical examination of these accounts, similarities, particularly in terms of embodied filmmaking practices resulting from intuitive creative processes and procedures, illustrate how the embodiment of practices can be researched.

These research findings describe how filmmakers made daily filmmaking decisions, which were both conscious and tacit, regarding how a spectator might make meaning from a yet-to-be-completed film. This awareness, of how the audience might read the film, became one of a number of factors that shaped each filmmaker's daily decisions. When brought together and critically examined against creativity theories (Sawyer 2006; Csikszentmihalyi 1999; Boden 1990; Bastick 1982), these individual accounts corroborate research on creativity and creative filmmaking practice that describes practices as being

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embodied, intuitive and tacit creative experiences that are constrained and enabled by the codes and conventions of the filmmaking context and the filmmaker's own agency.

Filmic creativity has been defined 'as essentially an artistic/cultural process which is structured by material constraints' (Petrie 1991, p. 1). This chapter extends these ideas to include not only the material constraints of filmmaking, which can be seen as enablers of creative action, but also the immaterial constraints, that is, the embodied codes and conventions that have been described as the rules of the domain and the opinions of the field by Csikszentmihalyi (1999). The idea that immaterial constraints can and do shape daily filmmaking or screenwriting practices is supported by creativity theories that describe embodied, tacit and intuitive understandings, whereby filmmakers absorb rules, conventions and audience expectations to the point that these contribute, often unconsciously, lead to creative practice. Sawyer argues that all persons acting within a creative field draw on a shared history of the domain, which results 'in the body of existing works that is known and is shared knowledge among creators in the area' (2006, p. 106).

This research corroborates the intentions of six filmmakers who describe their creative practice in similar ways. The similarities among these experiences become evident when the experiences are critically examined, and point to generic descriptions of processes, procedures and practices that shape each filmmaking context as well as the filmmaker's ability, knowledge and skill to make decisions and their assumed understanding of their audience or spectator. As such, these professional filmmaking research accounts describe similar experiences concerning the types of decisions filmmakers face daily, which occur as a result of a deep understanding of the conventions, rules and symbols that make up this creative domain and allow for that deep engagement to become intuitive.

Kerrigan (2016) argues that the systems view of creative practice can be used to explain the actions of the filmic agent as someone who holds knowledge of both filmmaking and spectating. This framework does not favour one creative activity over another; rather it adopts a systemic understanding that allows creative individuals to draw, simultaneously, on numerous domains of embodied knowledge, allowing such knowledge and skills to co-exist as agency manifesting through practice. In this context, creative agency becomes filmic agency, which permits the deeply interconnected positions of the filmmaker and the spectator to influence decision-making through daily practice. The conclusion of this critical analysis of multiple filmic agencies reveals that a mature filmic agency is an essential component of creative practice, as it allows for the stimulation, selection and transmission of novelty.

### CREATIVE FILMMAKING PRACTICE AS A SYSTEM IN ACTION

The creative system (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, p. 315) offers a large-scale perspective of how an individual contributes to the production of culture through bringing novelty into being. The novelty that is produced must comply with

sets of rules and social practices that are relevant to the domain, in this case filmmaking, and be recognized by other filmmakers as valuable. Once peers identify the novelty, as they see it, in someone else's film, then those ideas move 'beyond their original instigator and become part of a larger paradigmatic shift in thinking. Each person who supplies confirmation of the ideas may add something new to it, thereby giving the initial idea a life of its own' (McIntyre et al. 2016, p. 2).

This systems-based understanding of creativity was extended to create the systems view of creative practices (Kerrigan 2016, p. 127), which sees filmmaking research as systemic and identifies a set of creative principles used by filmmakers researching 'creative magnitude and scale, filmmaker or spectator and product or experience' (Kerrigan 2017, p. 9). Filmmaking creativity has often been undertaken through examining the film as a product, and by examining the success of the finished product, whereas the approach here is to examine creative experiences by researching filmmaking practice. The emphasis is on how practitioners internalize their creative systems, which affords them an opportunity to stimulate, select and transmit novel variations as a shared cultural understanding. Initially applied to documentary filmmaking practice (Kerrigan 2013, 2016), the same theoretical approach can be used to frame the work of others, that is, those who have examined their own experiences of making films in other genres and taken on other creative filmmaking roles.

An examination of six filmmaking researchers' creative experiences is possible because the filmmaking process occurs as a predictable staged process of concept development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution that is consistent for both fictional and non-fictional film productions. It is the form of a film's production and the practice of that form, not the content of the film, that is being examined here as a creative experience. The form provides a consistent approach to filmmaking practice (including its conventions, rules, patterns and processes) 'that has been developed over decades and that resides in the practices of the film-makers and the attitudes of audiences' (Kerrigan and McIntyre 2010, p. 117). Exactly how these six researchers conducted their work will be addressed in the next section, "[Screen Production Research Enquiries](#)".

## SCREEN PRODUCTION RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

Screen production research allows professional filmmakers to turn their filmmaking experiences into rationally identifiable practices (Batty and Kerrigan 2018); for them this is about uncovering and articulating 'knowledge that contributes to the broader practice' (Berkeley 2018, p. 31). This chapter embraces filmmaking as a unique interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice (Knudsen 2018). The understanding of this practice is strengthened by refining research methods and the methodologies specific to screen production. As Kerrigan et al. argue:

Research in screen production is by no means a homogenous activity but usually involves the production of a film (or other screen work), an interactive process of practice and reflection by a researcher who is also the screen practitioner, and a theoretical perspective that informs the overall research. (Kerrigan et al. 2015, p. 106)

Screen production research projects have specific aims which generate outcomes that are ‘aligned with the problems and issues that are of concern to practitioners’ (Berkeley 2018, p. 31). The practices described through these research accounts present experiences in key creative roles that are nuanced around the creation process of screen content. Instead of drawing on other disciplinary practices and thereby reinforcing antecedent research traditions, such as, for example, creative writing, theatre and photography, it is hoped that, instead, these accounts present authentic research reflections from filmmakers’ own experiences and creative practices. Each of the accounts here include the use of established methodologies such as practice-based research (Taylor 2014), reflective practice (Berkeley 2011), practice as research (Knudsen 2016), practitioner-based enquiry (Kerrigan 2013) or ethnography (Greenhalgh 2018).

As such, these accounts describe similar filmmaking experiences which illustrate how deeply immersed each filmmaker is in their embodied practice. To expand these ideas a number of screen production research projects have been selected for examination. Each has been realized through methodologies and methods oriented towards investigating and exposing the conscious and intuitive processes of creative filmmakers. These insights depended ‘on the researcher’s observations, experiences and aesthetic choices that are tied to specific times and places, co-existing with the creative work’ (Middleweek and Tulloch 2018, p. 234). Each account describes a range of daily decisions faced by those who fill these highly specialized filmmaking roles. All six cases explore the creative experiences of screen production researchers, including a screenwriter, a director, a cinematographer and an editor. The last two cases provide examples of researchers who have taken on multiple filmmaking roles. We will begin this discussion at the point that all film practice generally starts—the script.

### CREATIVE SCREENWRITING PRACTICE

Screenwriter Stayci Taylor (2014) wrestles with the common assumption that creative processes appear to be pitted against structural forms—in her case an intimate understanding of those structural forms being necessary to write a screenplay. Taylor’s account of her screenwriter’s experience explains how she found a way to appreciate and respect these external conventions. Her research identifies the dominant screenwriting models that favour technical and industrial concerns through exploring the relationship between structure and creativity by writing a female-centred comedy screenplay. In her research account, she describes how she faithfully followed a treatment writing model (Gigilo 2012) that was initially believed to constrain her imagination.

Taylor eloquently describes the screenwriter's challenge, which is to create a screenplay that 'is never read by the audience but must be understood by those on the list of many readers, the committee, who become the disseminators of the information that makes up one's story' (2014, p. 3). Her practice-based research explores the application of traditional models of screenwriting that allow her as a screenwriter to identify the creative act of screenwriting, which she describes as being dexterous with prose, action and dialogue combinations so 'that they should not put any obstacles in the way of the reader's experience of the story' (Taylor 2014, p. 7). This led Taylor to recognize the relevance of the art versus craft debate in relation to her exploration of screenwriting practice, and ponder, 'whilst the screenwriter is writing from this place between the story and its chosen platform, [she wants to explore] what this might mean for the writer's intentions and values?' (Taylor 2014, p. 7).

The research as practice is focused on an exploration of screenwriting codes and conventions that make it possible for Taylor to write funny female protagonists who are conveyed to the audience as she intended. A comprehensive review of the screenwriting literature and those who critique three-act structures, particularly those who have developed rules around writing male protagonists, serve as conventions to be understood yet challenged. As Taylor writes, 'I have not yet regretted pushing up against these counter-intuitive structures, which have challenged my imagination into working out how to take my protagonist through them, or have her respond to them' (2014, p. 12). Taylor realized her creative process helped in 'defining the protagonist's perspective [as] crucial to a comedic screenplay, because a reader and eventual audience need to know from whose "usually expected" events, from whose "truth", we can expect to experience those comedic departures' (2014, p. 10). Her final word on working within the codes and conventions, the symbol system of a screenplay which featured a funny female protagonist, was these constraints could be seen as being enabling, as they were 'also potentially useful in exploring new ways into those existing models' (Taylor 2014, p. 15).

In conclusion, she developed an appreciation of these models as beneficial to screenwriting practice, as they helped her incorporate screenwriting rules and conventions 'without rejecting all that has gone before' (Taylor 2014, p. 15). This position also sits well with cognitive psychologist and creativity researcher Margaret Boden's summation that constraints, 'far from being opposed to creativity, make creativity possible' (Boden 1990, p. 79). Thus, the creative screenwriting conventions and practice experienced and observed by Taylor that affected her practice were contextual and were both enabling and constraining.

## CREATIVE DIRECTING PRACTICE

Leo Berkeley made a fictional feature film called *How to Change the World* (2008). As the director, his focus was on improvised performances in screen production. Berkeley points out that a script was not written for the 70-minute

film but substantial preparation, premeditation and filming strategies were used to prompt and generate dialogue to ensure that the film would unfold along the right lines. For example, ‘there were two separate two-page outlines written, describing the stories of the main characters [...]. These outlines provided a framework for the characters and plot, although neither described an ending’ (Berkeley 2011, p. 4). There was some preparation in terms of discussing a scene, but very little rehearsal.

This type of preparation shows Berkeley’s professional and mature understanding of the medium and how the fictional film form needs to meet some pre-conceived notions that mean it will be accepted by film audiences. Berkeley describes his approach:

The majority of the dialogue scenes were based on whatever the actors ‘came up with’ in the first take, without prior rehearsal. That first take was then used as the basis for some additional coverage of the scene. (2011, p. 4)

While the dialogue may have been based on ‘whatever the actors came up with’, Keith Sawyer presents evidence to suggest that a process of collaborative emergence may have been at work. Sawyer suggests that diverse pre-existing structures guide improvisation and that many actors use improvisation in a dialogic situation to come up with dialogue that is comprehensible, so as to construct a novel yet dramatically cohesive performance. Despite the dialogue not being scripted in such cases, a highly structured performance does emerge. As ‘each line of dialogue is uttered this constrains the next line and the potential actions of the next speaker’ (2003, p. 230). In other words, what each comes up with is in some way predisposed to limit the next actor’s range of possible choices.

Using Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, as Berkeley does also, Sawyer demonstrates that ways of speaking and the use of certain cultural symbols are peculiar to specific times, and that any given speech act, such as dialogue, will contain many of these pre-structured forms. It is not that actors are overtly constrained by these structures but in order to make sense of a conversation they must adhere to these pre-existing linguistic and cultural forms. Sawyer suggests that despite these ‘multiple layers of downward causation, participants are never fully constrained. Their creativity is required at every dialogue turn’ (Sawyer 2003, p. 241). Although Berkeley’s actors may have started a scene with only a brief discussion of what it was about, in producing it they were complying with the codes and conventions of improvisation through dialogue. As Sawyer argues: ‘In both conversation and improvised dialogues, participants must balance the need to creatively contribute with the need to maintain coherence with the current state of the interactional frame’ (2003, p. 242).

In exploring this improvisation in the film he directed, Berkeley used a reflective practice methodology (Schön) that included a research journal, video recording by others of the production process and screening with audience feedback. A number of ideas from theorists (Fischlin and Heble 2004; Smith and Dean 2009), including Bakhtin and Holquist’s (1981; Bakhtin 1986) dis-

cussion of dialogism, were used reflectively to tease out the practice around decision-making and screen production improvisation that was being researched. Berkeley concluded his research method by focusing on a ‘centrifugal approach to narrative, with multiple dramatic components addressing the audience in a range of voices, rather than a focused, linear one’ (2011, p. 11). Berkeley’s research saw him focus on how meaning in film occurs through a collective practice. For him,

meaning is not fixed but rather created through a process of constant and shifting negotiation between multiple participants; essentially that the creative process is like a conversation between the people involved in the production, in the same way that meaning in the final screen text can be seen as a dialogue with the audience. (2011, pp. 11–12)

Berkeley’s findings are similar to Taylor’s in that they are both aware of their capacity as a creative practitioner, shaping, if only intuitively, the film’s narrative through the processes and practices of their role so that it can meet audience expectations.

### CREATIVE CINEMATOGRAPHER’S PRACTICE

Taking the role of cinematography as a further example, Cathy Greenhalgh defines cinematography as the act of ‘writing with light in motion’ (2018, p. 143). In her research she describes the job of cinematographer and links it to many material constraints which occur as a result of coordinating ‘the camera, grip and lighting teams in different crew combinations on a film to implement a visual strategy for a project’ (2018, p. 143). Greenhalgh’s insider perspective of this profession, which she has practised and taught for decades, as well as researched using an ethnographic approach, allows her to write with an intimate knowledge of the daily repetitive activities experienced in her professional role that illuminate what it means to practise cinematography. Greenhalgh also describes cinematography as a creative practice using Aristotelian terms, that is, ‘*poiesis* (making), *phronesis* (practical wisdom), *praxis* (reflection on action), *techne* (craft) and *episteme* (knowledge)’ (2018, p. 143). Scattered among this list is a set of what can be called immaterial constraints. These immaterial aspects just as readily shape decisions as material ones do. Their interaction with decisions that are made by a cinematographer point, again, to how a filmmaker internalizes practices, that is, as Kerrigan suggests,

their knowledge so that they can behave intuitively. This includes their intuitive responses to spectating, which inform their understanding of the field’s expectations and the domain rules. By internalizing the spectator’s knowledge, a filmmaker will try to meet those expectations through creative practice. (2016, p. 5)

Cathy Greenhalgh describes the role of the director of photography (DP or DoP) as someone who, through lighting, camera movement and composition,



designs a film's cinematography by 'working to the vision of the director. It varies widely how much the directors involve themselves in this. Work involves managing the lighting and electrical crew, grip and crane (camera movement) crew and the camera crew' (2010, p. 304). For a cinematographer to visualize a film Greenhalgh cites a number of understandings which include the creation of storyboards, shooting plans and knowing how to 'cheat' the positions of props, furniture, vehicles and even actors so that the dramatized action can be composed and framed specifically to the lenses' point of view (2010, p. 318). These aspects of a cinematographer's practice come together when working in a film-set environment and are difficult concepts to convey in any other place. For her, this kind of knowledge

needs bodily learning as much as knowledge of point of view, film grammar, optics and so on. One cannot know the likelihood of being able to transform a visual idea from two dimensions to three dimensions and then back again to two dimensions—[...]—without knowing whether things on set can be cheated into position. (Greenhalgh 2010, p. 315)

Greenhalgh's primary research method is 'cinematography praxis' (2018, p. 156) and her practitioner's attitude reveals 'cinematography is a particular form of thinking and collaborative activity, and a specific form of praxis that combines visual enskilment processes and a community of practice culture' (2018, p. 156). Greenhalgh emphasizes that a cinematographer's process has to be practised, and that as a beginner one may only be aware of the procedural operations 'until one has the sense of repeating an action procedure. The interrelation of understandings of practice, process and procedure may develop at different speeds according to how a series of practiced events occurs' (2010, p. 310). Indeed, every film requires different combinations of cinematographic practices because each film's content requires a different procedural approach. Greenhalgh's intuitive understanding of the practice of cinematography can be seen through her acute awareness of the differences and interrelationship among practices, processes and procedures.

### CREATIVE EDITOR'S PRACTICE

While cinematographers work largely on set, film editors working on scripted dramas do more than cut out the bad bits in the edit suite, they 'shape the film's final structure and rhythm' (Pearlman 2017, p. 69). Karen Pearlman's research into her own editing practice (2009, 2016) argues that film editing is also an intuitive practice described as a 'cognitively complex artistry of shaping time, energy, and movement, particularly the movement of events, emotions, image, and sound to create cycles of "tension and release"' (Pearlman 2017, p. 68). Pearlman notes that:

Editors' processes require responsive, embodied, and distributed thinking about how the mass of moving material in front of them might be pieced together to

make a dynamically structured and rhythmically engaging whole. (Pearlman 2017, p. 69)

Pearlman (2016, 2017) focuses on the editing conventions of time, space and continuity. Using a reflective method to research her own tacit and intuitive editing practice, Pearlman has critically examined examples of her own work as well as the work of other film editors.

In total, Pearlman's research led to a proposition that 'there is a cognitive complexity to creative decision making in film editing beyond creation of the impression of continuity of time and space' (2017, p. 86). As such, she argues that editors intuitively strategize by creating complex affects and cuts which demonstrate 'purposefully developed expertise and cognitive capacities' (Pearlman 2017, p. 84). Pearlman tests the rhythm of her editing with each project she undertakes as she describes the assembly, rough-cut and fine-cut processes as first, second and third versions of a hypothesis showing 'selection, placement, and duration of shots [and how they] will affect an audience. ... Iterations of edited versions of the same material may number in the dozens sometimes, and these could perhaps be used as data' (Pearlman 2016, p. 79). From this perspective, film editing can be described as an iterative process:

We edit, it doesn't feel right, we go back, recut, and feel again until it does. Each version of a cut reveals the editor's process of shaping the timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing of the movement of events, emotions, images, and sounds to create an affective experience that goes beyond conformity to the rules of continuity and becomes the art of editing. (Pearlman 2017, p. 82)

Pearlman argues that the feeling of getting it right is 'an editor's conscious and nonconscious creative processes' (2017, p. 68) that is dominated by more complex considerations which 'have a significant impact on audience narrative comprehension and emotional alignment with characters in film' (2017, p. 68). For her, these complex cognitive and precognitive processes are intuitive, they are an 'embodied simulation' (2017, p. 84) which is not a metaphysical or paranormal process beyond rational grasp. Instead, for her, intuition develops over time and through experience.

In other words, it is learned:

Scientists, educators, and even artist are clear: the knowledge and analysis that underpins expert action has to be gathered. Explicit knowledge is an essential support to intuition. It is the learned knowledge that gets transferred from working memory into intuitive action. The more that is explicitly known, the more readily accessible intuitive responses will be. (Pearlman 2016, p. 10)

Pearlman's research encapsulates an editor filmic agency, described as her editor's intuition developed through her engagement with and manipulation of external storytelling conventions that are specific to the craft of film editing. This reinforces the broader context that filmic creativity is shaped by external rules and social conventions through a filmmaker's agency.

## CREATIVE PRACTICE OF A DOCUMENTARY MAKER

While these accounts of discrete individual crew roles reveal filmic agency, other filmmaking researchers have taken on more than one professional crew role and can provide additional insights. For example, Susan Kerrigan, one of the authors of this chapter, researched her own documentary creative practice and, in doing so, assumed the multiple roles of writer, producer and director. Kerrigan (2016) used practice-led research to examine her creative practices and daily decisions as a documentary producer/writer/director. She used reflective practice (Schön 1983) applied through another method of documentary screen production, which allowed her to directly test the systems view of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1999).

Kerrigan explored her daily decision-making practice through the making of a community-based documentary about a historical site in Newcastle, Australia. The project documented the history of the site and its restoration (Kerrigan 2013) and collected data through a reflective learning journal, production documents, shot film and edited sequences, which showed that the documentary was shaped by logistical constraints, budget and the film's crew, who were made up of professionals and students (Kerrigan 2018).

This filmmaking context provided an opportunity for Kerrigan to examine her own intuitive creative practices (Kerrigan 2013) as her practice was tested against the creative systems model (Csikszentmihalyi 1999). She found her filmmaking choices were being made in relation to her habitus (Bourdieu 1993), which was linked to her ability to act intuitively through the 'social, cultural and contextual conditions of practice' (Kerrigan 2013, p. 124) with which she engaged. She argued that in this process creative individuals internalize their creative systems (Kerrigan 2016). This internalization occurs as practitioners immerse themselves in their production context or environment; in this case filmmaking, and their aspirations and accumulated story or narrative knowledge enables them to consciously and intuitively, tacitly and without conscious thought make decisions that help move the film towards completion. Frequently this means, as filmmakers, they are faced with making a series of creative decisions that are staged or procedural and that the creative stages 'overlap and recur several times before the process is completed' (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, p. 83).

Kerrigan's practice was critically analysed and she found that her intuition and tacit knowledge, derived from her domain knowledge and understanding of the opinions of her peers, was acquired through a 13-year film and television career. One of the underdeveloped areas of her past career was craft skills: she had never worked as a camera operator. Kerrigan kept a 149-page journal reflecting on her practice, where examples of her embodied tacit knowledge were documented. The journal provided accounts of filming days where her low level of skill combined with a high level of challenge resulted in the recording of substandard film footage. Kerrigan had never trained as a camera operator and, on a key oral history recording, her

limited skills became evident. There were a few unfortunate reframing errors that appeared at essential moments of the interviews and which could not be edited out because of the relevance of the story being told (Kerrigan 2008, *Using Fort Scratchley*, DVD, see 12:18 minutes). Consequently, these aesthetic compromises exist as evidence of the constraining production context that was experienced by herself as a documentary filmmaker, and these errors also exist as proof of her low-level skills when faced with a high level of challenge. At this stage of the production the work did not flow.

As the documentary moved through its production stages Kerrigan immersed herself in the codes and conventions of documentary practice (Kerrigan 2011, p. 51), some of her technical skills improved, and her expert skills as a producer and director meant that she successfully assembled a team of 30 documentary participants who worked as crew and on-camera participants or advisors (Kerrigan 2018). In conclusion, Kerrigan found that her rational approach to creativity as mapped against the creative systems theory did demonstrate to her how she had, over a period of time, internalized the rules of the domain and the opinions of the field:

The fact that the intersection of my own agency with the social, cultural and contextual conditions of practice had produced intuitive actions confirms that I had internalized the Fort Scratchley documentary system. These learnt dispositions had become ‘second nature’, my habitus, and for a practitioner who is already operating as a conditioned agent, they can give the feeling of being able to ‘freely’ make choices about contextual practices. (Kerrigan 2013, p. 124)

Kerrigan’s internalization of the Fort Scratchley creative system did provide an accurate description of her embodied creative filmmaking practice (Kerrigan 2013).

### CREATIVE PRACTICES OF A FEATURE FILMMAKER

Kerrigan’s work can be aligned with the research accounts of Erik Knudsen. Knudsen researched fiction filmmaking through multiple roles as screenwriter, director and editor. While Kerrigan and Knudsen undertook their research independently of each other, they both focused on intuitive and tacit decision-making within an industrial filmmaking model. Knudsen describes the research context as being ‘exclusive and largely determined by technological and financial constraints, [which] shaped divisions of labour along technological and procedural fault lines’ (Knudsen 2016, p. 110).

Erik Knudsen mounts a similar argument to Taylor when describing the purpose of a screenplay and the creative approach that a screenwriter should take: ‘screenwriting is not an end product, but a particular developmental phase in a creative process whose end is a moving image product’ (Knudsen 2016, p. 109). In his article ‘The Total Filmmaker Thinking of Screenwriting, Directing and Editing as One Role’ (2016), Knudsen acknowledges that the

industrial filmmaking model needs large complex teams holding designated roles and undertaking highly specialized responsibilities in order to move a film through its stages of production, including ‘idea, proof of concept, development, production, post production, testing and compliance, distribution and exhibition’ (Knudsen 2016, p. 110). Knudsen points out that ‘with so many people involved, and so much at stake for everyone, the status quo is reinforced and progress is measured primarily in terms of refinement’ (2016, p. 110).

Therefore, the environment of a film’s production, its production context, has a significant impact on what is produced and on the quality of the practices that shape the film. Through his experience, Knudsen acknowledges the importance of collaborative filmmaking:

The transdisciplinary contribution made by the production team and the performers, who each in their own right are, in a sense, undertaking their own creative explorations, provide an important context. Not only is the creative context they bring to the project important in the context of creative research, but they also provide the industrial context in which the film sits. (Knudsen 2018, p. 122)

This insider observation describes how Knudsen’s film was shaped by those who worked on it and how they were all constrained by the production context. Reflecting on his multiple roles whilst making *Raven on the Jetty*, Knudsen describes the daily decisions he made as screenwriter, director and editor:

Decisions about what we see and what we don’t see; what scenes are necessary and in which order; what needs to be said and what could be conveyed through sound or looks; all these considerations were influenced by my understanding of how I wanted to incorporate aural and visual components in the film. Even the very narrative structure was guided by this interplay between the writer, director and editor in me. (2018, p. 127)

While working on multiple crew roles simultaneously, Knudsen recognized that many decisions occurred ‘organically—even, in some cases, mindlessly—in response to financial, logistical, social and political circumstances, curiosity, conscious and unconscious aspirations and creative imperatives’ (Knudsen 2018, p. 122). In this case, we can assert that it is the embodiment of decision-making processes that becomes internalized which supports the psychological descriptions of what creativity is.

## CONCLUSION

The similarity of these researcher accounts lies in how the participants describe the practices and processes they experienced. At their core, these creative practices describe how filmic agents make decisions inside filmic structures that both constrain and enable their activity (Kerrigan 2016, p. 10). These latter two filmmakers not only provided research accounts that extended the singular

accounts from the screenwriter, director, cinematographer and editor, they also set themselves a slightly more intensive research tasks as, throughout their productions, they had to perform as multi-skilled filmmakers undertaking multiple tasks simultaneously. The creative filmmaking described through the prior four exclusive, highly specialized accounts of screenwriting, directing, cinematography and editing practice and process, corroborates a similar intention to create, through the filmic medium, a novel representation of a story that will be appreciated by those who also understand and appreciate filmmaking practice.

Creativity theory aligns with these filmmaker's intentions as the similarities identified through these accounts describe the creative processes and practices which can be mapped on to, and are consistent with, creativity theories that describe creativity as occurring when 'one must internalise the rules of the domain and the opinions of the field, so that one can choose the most promising ideas to work on, and do so in a way that will be acceptable to one's peers' (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, p. 332).

By bringing together six screen producer accounts from roles that are determined by the industry to be key creative decision-making ones—screenwriter, director, cinematographer, editor, or combining these roles into one person when making a documentary or fictional feature film—it can be seen how such creative practice is shaped by the filmic structures, practices and contexts these filmmakers immerse themselves in, embody and engage with. As has been argued elsewhere about filmmaking creativity:

These three elements [structures, practices and contexts] align with current understanding of creative practice because the agent has been conditioned through their spectatorial and creational knowledge of film production which allows them to practice—engage in procedural processes as they are exposed to film production structures and contexts. A filmmaker's creative practice occurs at the level of embodiment, through the internalization of skills, knowledge and socio-cultural positioning. (Kerrigan 2016, p. 8)

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# Commission, Position and Production: Intent and Intervention in Minority Language Programmes

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter uses two of my own documentaries produced for BBC Alba, Scotland's Gaelic-language channel, to consider how programme treatments, once approved, develop through pre-production into production. It looks at how the documentary filmmaker's ideas and intention are mediated and changed by commissioning practices and production constraints. In so doing, it asks *who* mediates and constructs the final programme and *how* this construction is negotiated creatively.

Nichols (2001) suggests that in order to understand what documentaries are about, one needs to look at how three stories intertwine: the story of the filmmaker and an understanding of why the film was made; the story of the text and what it reveals about the relationship between the filmmaker and subject; and finally the story of the audience. This chapter examines these in terms of the effect they have on ideas, pre-production and production, and on the role of the filmmaker as 'creator'.

The chapter is framed by discourse around intervention and intention and how these act on production decisions. My approach in this chapter is self-reflexive, using the two documentaries produced for BBC Alba as case studies. One of these is a drama documentary, the other an observational documentary completed without voice-over. These allow for an exploration into the different genre of the two broadcast works, where the vexed question of dramatic reconstructions and the issues they raise in terms of manipulating reality

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(Winston 1995, 2008; Rosenthal and Corner 2005; Paget 2011) are explored. It also allows for an investigation into the role genre plays in the commissioning process and the expectation of the audience. Ideas of subjectivity are explored through considering voice, in the context of Bruzzi (2000) and Nichols' (1991, 1993, 2001) writing on subjectivity and the ideology of authenticity (Grierson 1979). Finally, the chapter considers intention through the lens of theories around authorial intention (Gaut 1997; Livingston 1997; Ponch 1997).

### THE COMMISSIONER: BBC ALBA

The third side of Nichols' triangulation of story is the audience. BBC Alba's audience is the Gaelic-speaking community of Scotland. The channel was launched in September 2008, as part of a strategic intervention to halt language decline (Cormack 2008) and bring Gaelic to a wider audience, and has been available on Freeview since June 2011. Programmes have English subtitles and the channel has an annual budget of around £12 million. The service remit of BBC Alba is to 'reflect and support Gaelic culture, identity and heritage' (BBC Trust 2016). This remit imposes, or results in, commissioning requirements that influence production decisions.

BBC Alba is a multi-genre channel, averaging around 530,000 viewers each week, although much of this number represents non-Gaelic speakers who are drawn to the channel to watch its sports provision. Currently, there are less than 60,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland. Given that the demographics of the core audience (aside from sport) are so well known, the commissioning editors can be forensically specific about the genre of programming they are looking for. As a result, viewers know when to tune in for specific programmes, or genre of programmes; at 9 pm there will be the 'heritage' documentary, whilst at 7 pm they can expect a cookery programme, and then late at night, Gaelic music.

By deciding on a genre, the filmmaker is opting for certain conventions and signals whereby the viewer will understand the 'text' within this genre. The filmmaker does this in the knowledge that they are helping the audience make a decision as to whether to watch the programme, based on their expectations and ability to engage in genre-based viewing (Altman 1999). Neale writes (of genre in the cinema, but his point is equally valuable for television):

Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis that spectators bring with them to the cinema and that interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process. (2000, p. 158)

If genre is a formula, label (Altman 1999) or a 'set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning' (Frow 2005, p. 10), then it is acknowledged that it is both useful as a theoretical