

Creative Team Interview

—Lighting Designer, Benjamin Cisterne

What interested you in having a career in Lighting Design?

When I was a kid, I really enjoyed pulling things apart and working out how to put them back together. I was really interested in the mechanics and technology of how something worked. By the time I was 14 I was doing the lighting at school for the drama productions, I used to hang out in the drama room working out how the technology all worked and putting it together to help build the show – I also made my own radio station at the school, so it all really started by me following what I was naturally interested in doing.

When I was a little older I went to Bradfield College to study my HSC, and I met a lot of teachers who had links in the industry. During my time there I did work experience, where I worked at Wayside Chaple Theatre (now Darlinghurst Theatre) and Griffin Theatre, it really helped me to meet different people working in the industry, I was then able to keep assisting and developing on different

projects. I also had a really great experience of working with Joe Mercurio who was designing for Bangarra Dance Theatre at the time.

What subjects did you enjoy at school?

I enjoyed and was pretty good at maths. I also really enjoyed any time we looked at electronics as I found I was a pretty good electrician and was challenged by trying to figure out how circuits worked. I was also really inspired by my English teacher and what we studied in that class, I think the stories and literature we read opened my eyes to a different world of the arts, I loved what I could imagine through the words.

Which other artists or subjects do you look to for inspiration or that have inspired you?

I have always looked to contemporary art for my inspiration and also architecture. Gregory Crewdson is one. All lighting designers have been inspired by his work over the last 20 years. We are also of course in awe of James Turrell. Those are the big names end up

infiltrating our lives. In Australia I have always been particularly inspired by the work of Margie Medlin, her work has such sophistication and a level of finesse that I always envy and strive for.

<https://unsited.org>

<http://www.gregorycrewdsonmovie.com>

<http://jamesturrell.com>



Image of Benjamin Cisterne and Antony Hamilton in rehearsals. Photo Credit: Jack Saltmiras.

How do you approach the lighting design in a practical sense?

I actually take my method straight out of the book I learned from *Designing with light* by Michael Gillett, it takes the following process:

Commitment - Decide to do the project and then put everything you've got in you into it.

Analysis - What information is given by the Choreographer or Director or in theatre the script.

Research - This is the biggest part I do lots of searching for imagery and have discussions between the director and myself. We send images to each other and different references for inspiration.

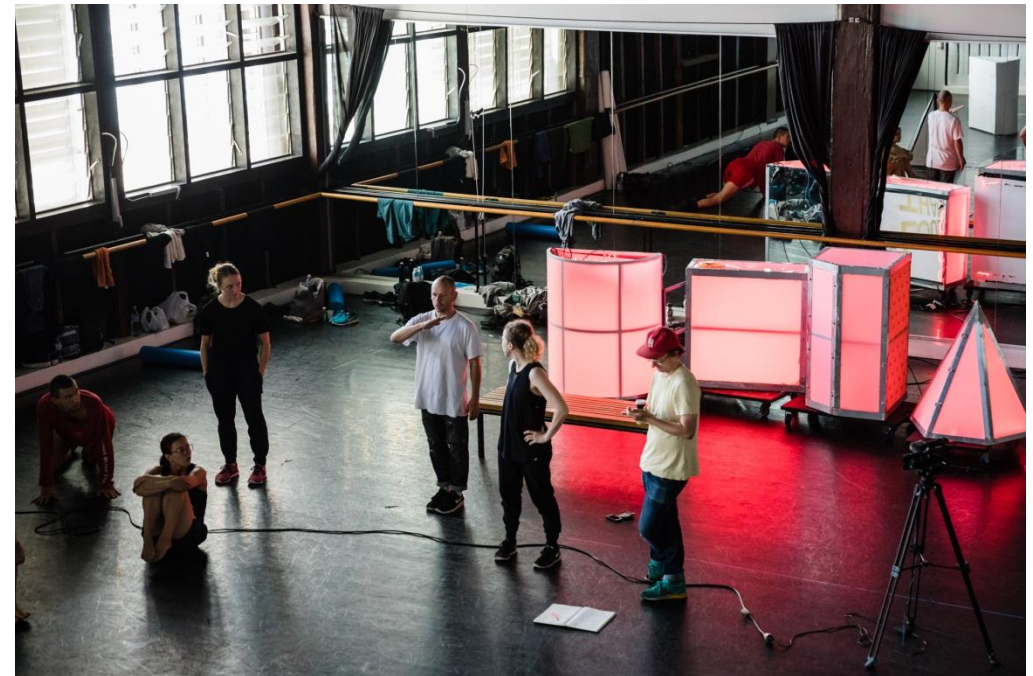
Incubation - I love this part; it was revolutionary to me when I read this. Physically do something completely different for a while and let your subconscious do some background work and make some decisions.

Selection - Come back from that time with a clean perspective and choose the ideas that you will take forward

Implementation - Technical work for drawing and creating the designs to take into the venue or theatre.

Evaluation - Always look back over that project and try to improve the working method moving forward.

Gillett notes that this process is not linear, it is a constant cycle over the creative process.



Mock-up of lighting boxes during rehearsals. Ben took what he learnt from this to develop the final set and lighting design for the show. Photo Credit: Jack Saltmiras