

andrewcarter

a brief family and working history

Born in Goomalling in rural Western Australia in 1957, Andrew Carter was one of four children to highly talented parents who had for a time given up city life to work in the country. Carter's father was an accomplished pianist, Industrial Chemist and Minister. His mother was an Opera Singer. In 1960 Carter moved with his family from Goomalling to the United States where his father completed post graduate studies in Sacred Theology at Yale University through a Fullbright Scholarship. The family travelled throughout north America and Canada by road as well as parts of Europe. Much of the ocean travel was done on small freighters where they were sometimes the only passengers. Carter returned to another small rural town in WA with his family in 1965.

He was accepted in the Art and Design programme at the Western Australian Institute of Technology in 1977. In 1979 he graduated with a degree in Industrial Design and started working as a free lance designer, specialising in original one off pieces of furniture. Carter had been involved with music through his family performing from a young age which led to him performing in his own bands playing in pubs and other venues throughout the state. He was a paid up member of the musicians union until 1978. One day while researching material in the university library a book literally fell on his head demanding attention. The book was a survey on International Theatre Design and in it he noticed the work of celebrated Chinese American artist/designer Ming Cho Lee. After hours of ploughing through the book Carter decided then and there that he was going to change careers and wanted to find out more about Theatre Design. He noticed that all the work submitted on Ming Cho Lee was courtesy of Yale University so he wrote off to find out more. Information about both Lee and the programme were forthcoming. Carter stopped all other work and concentrated for three months to put together a portfolio as well as design an Opera for the West Australian Opera. He did the later for free in exchange for the opportunity to get some experience. The Opera Company did eventually pay a small fee for his services. The course at Yale accepted between 3 and 5 students a year in his field. It was a full time course five and a half days a week for three years culminating in a Masters Degree in Fine Arts. Carter was accepted into the course and moved to the United States for the next four years. He received a small grant from the WA department of the Arts as well as help from one of his brothers but the majority of the tuition and living expenses came from working as a short order cook, a musician, maitre d', and builders labourer. He graduated in 1984 without owing any money.

While in America he wrote two short plays for the Yale Cabaret as well as performing musically at the university. With several other students he formed the band Notes From Underground, playing original music which made it all the way to an interview with Arista Records in New York. Carter had to make a decision to change careers again to music or stay and complete his Masters. He choose to stay at Yale and after graduation moved to Colorado for a year to recover where he did part time work with the Denver Centre Theatre Company, hiked parts of the Rocky Mountains and wrote some bad poetry. During his time at Yale he was privileged to work on several productions with established professionals including the actor James Earl Jones and playwright, Athol Fugard.

In 1985 Carter returned to Australia where no one would give him employment in his new profession so he set about to try and paint landscapes of his home town of Goomalling. After many failed attempts at trying to capture the town in paint he gave up. Instead, he wrote a short play about it. As an after thought he passed it across the counter of the State Theatre company not realising that they were having a competition for new playwrights. Carter's play "The Shark" was selected (The judge was Kathryn Brisbane) and given a moved public reading. At the same time Carter was also finally offered a design commission with the West Australian Ballet through Barry Moreland. He took the later and put writing on hold until he had finished the ballet. He put in another play the following year and was also successful, but once again something distracted him from this path. Sydney Dance Company offered Carter a chance to do a new work at the Sydney Opera House with Graeme Murphy so he moved East and started the beginning of a successful career specialising as a designer for contemporary Dance, Physical Theatre and Ballet which took him all over the world for the next twenty years.

It was while working in Sydney that Carter realised that there was something missing in his career and this eventually led to more interest in painting and sketching. Many of his commissions in design required him to complete paintings as well as numerous sketches and in the end he realised that he wanted to investigate the area of fine art more. On many occasions Carter would pack up his old four wheel drive Landover and head off into the desert alone to sketch and write. Most of this work affected his designs and also lead to an interest in working with Indigenous art groups.

In 1988 Carter was approached to be involved in three major Bicentennial Projects. He choose two. One of the most important was Vast. An epic work involving the Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, The West Australian and Queensland Ballet. The work was based on the landscape of Australia with Music composed by Barry Cunningham and Choreography by Graeme Murphy. Carter choose to drive across Australia by himself in a straight line from East to West capturing the landscape as he went in words, sketches and paintings. The outcome of this started Carter on a serious investigation into paintings and by 1991 Carter was making half his income from his paintings. Because he never entered competitions he has remained relatively unknown as a painter despite his success. There has also been a tendency for the establishment to see Carter as a designer only and reject the other aspects of his career.

In 1990 Carter was invited to be a member of the Art In Public Spaces Committee for the new city of Joondalup to help establish relationships between artists and development groups to design and build infrastructure for the new city. After two years of work Carter retired from the position and was immediately offered the demanding project of designing all the major street lighting poles for the city in collaboration with the engineering company ETC. The project when complete made front page of the West Australian newspaper's Arts section and won Carter an Engineering Commendation Award. In 1994, wanting to move his work further into Asia, Carter created his own mini Festival in Malaysia (Carcosa Festival) linking Australian Art, Music and Dance. The West Australian Government heard

about the idea and joined in with a contingent featuring Wine, Food and Fashion. As well as being the Artistic Director, he exhibited a series of large paintings based on his travels. This led to a series of commissioned works over a two year period in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. The Perth International Arts Festival (PIAF) commissioned Carter to create an installation for its 1999 season, *Socket*, which combined his skills in design, painting, music and sculpture to create a large scale work based on the subject of "Icons and X-rays", collaborating with Radiologist, Dr Alar Kaard to deconstruct the concept of beauty through x-ray imaging techniques. Carter was also commissioned to create and design the Watershed for the festival which featured a club and performance space for international music acts.

2000 saw Carter invited to be part of the Design Team for the Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony. However, after some difficulties with producers and fees Carter was forced to withdraw and took on a commission instead from Howard Park winery in the Margaret River region to create a seven-metre painting/sculpture using steel, timber and paint. It was the beginning of a more full time commitment to painting. In September 2001, Carter was the Production Designer for the most ambitious Indigenous cultural gathering in Australia. The Yeperenye Federation Festival. The event was held outside of Alice Springs. The collaboration involved indigenous artists from across Australia and required Carter to design a camping ground for thirty five thousand people, five minor stages and one large concert stage in the desert. The Australian Air Force was called in for transport of equipment to the remote location as well as local prisoners to help with construction. The event featured past Prime Ministers, Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser who appeared on the stage together with many artists including Yothu Yindi and Paul Kelly.

Carter has pursued most areas of the visual arts including Painting, Public Art/Sculpture, Designing Scenery and Lighting for the Performing Arts, Print Making, as well as several collaborations in Installation. Since returning to Australia he has received several grants and awards for his contribution. These include the Creative Development Fellowship from the WA Department For The Arts, as well as a Green Room Award for Design in Melbourne. He has been a guest lecturer at WAAPA, NIDA and Curtin University.

Carter has held 12 solo exhibitions of his paintings and participated in numerous group showings, with work held in several private collections including Kerry Stokes and the Royal Australian Navy. Past commissions have seen Carter in Hong Kong, Singapore, as well as Malaysia where he completed a series of large works on canvas for the international, multi media company, Vision Four located in Kuala Lumpur. In Perth he was commissioned by the prestigious Kings Park restaurant Fraser's to create works based on trips he had undertaken to the remote regions of Arnhem Land as a solo artist as well as with the Physical Theatre Company, Stalker. With Stalker, Carter also worked with the indigenous custodians of the Mimi Stories which became the major work for the 1999 Olympic Dreaming Festival in Sydney.

As well as Painting and Physical Theatre, Carter has produced Design work for every major Dance company in Australia as well as many Choreographers. This includes The Australian Ballet, Chunky Move, Sydney Dance Company, West Australian Ballet, Barry Moreland, Gary Stewart, Stephen Baynes and Gideon Obarzanec. Overseas, he has created Designs for and had work produced by the Nederland's Dans Theatre, The Royal Ballet (Covent Gardens) the Royal Danish Ballet, the Dutch Nationale as well as working for the Bermuda, Dutch and Denver Arts Festivals. As a result Carter has had work tour North and South America, much of Europe, and South East Asia.

In August 2002, on short notice, Carter was invited to head the Design team for the entire Closing Ceremony for the Manchester Commonwealth Games working with Artistic Director Nigel Jamison. The original team had all been stood down after two years work and Carter, collaborating with Jamison, had just three weeks to present a new Ceremony and three months to have it all constructed and rehearsed. To date it has been one of the biggest challenges of his career. As a result of that collaboration Carter was also asked by Jamison to be the Head Designer for the Opening Ceremony for the Melbourne 2006 Games. In the Nederland's the Dutch National Ballet & Amsterdam Festival commissioned Carter to create a multi media work which included video, photography, lighting and design for their 2005 season. Carter also had work in that year at The Heerlen Festival in Holland.

Carter now lives in Denmark in the remote Great Southern Region of Western Australia with his Wife Holly (Ex Ballet Dancer Australian Ballet and WA Ballet) and two young sons on a small property near Greens Pool, one of the countries most beautiful beaches. His life is supported entirely by the proceeds of painting. As a visual artist he has now committed himself completely to the study and practice of painting inspired by the vast pool of experience he has created over the past three decades. His other passions, writing and music have combined and he is now concentrating on writing some new music to perform with fellow musicians when time permits and several short stories are in draft form.

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