

JESSE BROOKS

INTRODUCTION

I am a magician, designer and theatre-maker with a focus on the mystery arts and immersive theatrical practice. I have worked with and trained with the leading immersive/experiential design groups in the world, including Punchdrunk, designers from Meow Wolf, Third Rail Projects and Odyssey Works, with whom I completed an Experience Design Masterclass in New York. I have worked in designing/fabricating lighting, props and set for theatre; as well as in experience design and magic/illusion consultation for live performance and film. My academic work has centred on an exploration of wonder in terms of spatial design and the curation of atmospheres. I have interests in circus, puppetry, object-manipulation and immersive or experiential works.

- **Performer, Designer, Lecturer**
- **Prop-making & Set & Lighting Design Experience**
- **Interest and specialization in Immersive/Experiential Work**

EDUCATION

MASTER OF ARTS: University of Cape Town – 2021– 2022 (*first class pass/distinction*)

- In Theatre-Making & Scenography

BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS): University of Cape Town – 2020 (*first class pass/distinction*)

- Theatre & Performance, Technical Theatre Specialisation (Scenography)

BACHELOR OF ARTS (HUMANITIES): Stellenbosch University – 2014 – 2016

- Majoring in Psychology and Visual Studies, Minor in Philosophy

MATRIC: Herzlia High School: 2009 – 2013.

- 80% Aggregate, University Exemption

ACADEMIC AWARDS

First Class:

- 75% or higher for all subjects from Honours to Masters years

Merit Bursary:

- Stellenbosch University. 2015. Overall academic excellence.

Golden Key:

- Awarded membership of the Golden Key International Honours Society (at Stellenbosch University & UCT) which represents the top 15% of each faculty in universities throughout the world.

SKILLS

- CONCEPT DESIGN
- CREATIVE/MAGIC CONSULTATION

- FACILITATION
 - WRITING AND PRESENTATION
 - PERFORMANCE
 - FABRICATION, DESIGN AND MODEL MAKING
 - EXPERIENCE DESIGN
 - IMMERSIVE THEATRE & EXPERIENTIAL WORK
 - INTERDISCIPLINARY THEATRE MAKING
-

Work Experience:

SCENOGRAPHY/STAGE DESIGN WORK

June 2026

- Lighting Designer and Act Director for the College of Magic's Makin' Magic.

June – September 2025

- Concept design for prop elements in Steven Cohen's '*People Will People You*'.

November – December 2023

- Performer and Magic Consultant for Brett Bailey's Summer Night's Dream at Spier

January – March 2023

- Scenographer for *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Maynardville Open Air Theatre, Second run at Woordfees in October 2023.

July – November 2022

- Scenographic Magic Consultant for Steven Cohen's new touring show, Boudoir (France and Switzerland), produced by VIDY Lausanne. Travelled to Europe to provide concept and creative design work integrating magic into an immersive installation performance. Illusions were drawn from in-depth study of the work of the artist.

June – August 2022

- Assistant Designer to Craig Leo/Propmaker – Chris Weare's *The Seagull & Stupid F---ing Bird*

December 2022

- Prop Maker/Scenographer and Assistant Lighting Designer for *Clouds Like Waves*

November – December 2021

- Lighting Designer and Operator for *The Shell Singer*

April – June 2020

- Assistant Designer for College of Magic's *Imagine!* At the Artscape Theatre

January – March 2020

- Immersive Theatre Consultant and Designer for *Together/Alone* at the Galloway Theatre (postponed production).

September – November 2020

- Assistant Designer for Lara Foot's *Ways of Dying* (2020) at the Baxter Theatre.

FREELANCE MAGIC PERFORMANCE /CREATIVE & MAGIC CONSULTATION

Performance

- Professional performer for various private events/functions (2010 – Present)
- Founder & Director 'Know Wonder' for professional consulting & immersive work (2019 – Present)
- Performer at the Cape Town Magic Club (2016 – 2018)
- Guest Performer with the Italian Circus Company Wanda Circus Teatro Scuola (2018)

Corporate Clients (performance) include:

- Universal Studios; Dell; Cotton On; Yoco; Pick n Pay; Game; The Happy Africa Foundation; The Playwell Foundation; Hazendal Wine Farm; Community Chest Carnival; Seelan Restaurant; Plant Restaurant; Woordfees Festival; Royal Cape Yacht Club; Vortex Trance Adventures; Levi Strauss; The Art of Duplicity (Truth Coffee)

Festivals:

- Resident performer at Vortex (2017-2019)
- Performer at Bazique Music Festival (2018)
- Wrote and performed daily magic shows in the Desert Magic Theme Camp at the Afrikaburn Festival (2012-2017)

Consulting

- Magic Consulting – Steven Cohen, Boudoir
- Concept development and creation of music video – The Bletchley Park Project for Duncan McKay (ex- 10cc) (2017)
- Magic Consultant for German Advertisement (2017)
- Magic consultant/creative consultant for feature film, "*Magic: The Movie*" (2017/18)
- Magic Consultant for student film, "*Phenom*" (2016)

Workshops

- Developed and presented a class on experience design for postgraduate students at the University of Stellenbosch (2017)
- Developed and presented magic workshop "The Art of Astonishment: A Crash Course in Magic" for No Danger Diaries Festival (2016)

LECTURING/TEACHING

The College of Magic

April 2025 – Present

- Training Manager
- Coordinates training across magic, juggling, puppetry, mime, clowning, drama, ventriloquism, technical theatre etc.
- Currently working on immersive 'school tour' among other projects.

The SAE Institute

February 2024 – February 2025

Lecturer:

- Responsible for a variety of classes spanning topics such as art history, media analysis, semiotics, media theory and applied research for students in the creative arts/media industry.

University of Cape Town (UCT)

April – August 2023

- Sound and Lighting Lecturer 2nd year cohort
- Lectured on theoretical concepts as applied to the practice of sound and lighting in performance – also included filmic graphic design and production design.

March – May 2023

- Ecoscenography Lecturer for Honours 2023 Cohort.
- Scenography Tutor for 3rd Year Theatre & Performance Students.

The Red & Yellow School of Design

June – September 2021, June – July 2022, March – April 2023

- Teaching Assistant for Red & Yellow School of Design in Visual Studies. Considered various modernist art movements, film theory and aesthetic/philosophical theory.

University of Cape Town (UCT)

January – November 2020

- Conducted performance tutoring and academic facilitation of 1st year theatre and performance students at the University of Cape Town.

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Ordinary Magic Course with Laika DeLore 2026

Was accepted and completed a 6-week course in Experience Design, led by Laika DeLore (former Lead Experience Designer at Meow Wolf, learning her techniques and processes for experiential design and the creation of immersive rituals.

Third Rail Projects: Immersive Makers: Devising, and Crafting Meaningful Works that Center the Audience Experience 2025

Attended course on making/devising experiential works by co-artistic director of NY based Third Rail Projects, Tom Pearson.

Third Rail Projects: Writing for Immersive Theater and Experiential Performance 2025

- Attended course on writing for immersive theatre by co-artistic director of NY based Third Rail Projects, Zach Morris.

Orange Corners/Craft & Design Institute Business Incubator Fellow 2024

- Part of a cohort of 10 people in Cape Town funded by the Netherlands' government to build out a business idea.

Punchdrunk (UK) Immersive Lab 2023

- Was selected as one of 10 people globally to join Punchdrunk's first Immersive Lab, which supported me in developing an immersive performance concept for young audiences.

Punchdrunk (UK) Masterclass in Performance

2021

- Attended a masterclass by the UK immersive theatre company Punchdrunk, exploring their process for devising and performing in immersive works.

Punchdrunk (UK) Masterclass in Design

2021

- Attended a masterclass by the UK immersive theatre company Punchdrunk, exploring their design process.

School of Scenography: Exhibiting Designer

2020

- Accepted to exhibit scenographic design at the School of Scenography: Sketch the Set Challenge Exhibit in London, UK.

Odyssey Works Experience Design Masterclass Fellow

2019

- Accepted to join the Odyssey Works Masterclass in New York, USA. Successfully completed the Masterclass.

REFERENCES

Mark Gamble, Aspire Youth

Executive Director

082 676 0565 | mark@aspireyouth.co.za

Jenni-Lee Crewe, UCT

Head of Department, Scenography

jenni-lee.crewe@uct.ac.za