

## JOHN EDWARD TRUSCOTT (1936-1993)

### Academy award winner returns home to Melbourne

John Truscott's talent for design was quickly apparent and his faith in his skills never wavered.

As a young student at Caulfield Technical College, John sent a portfolio of his designs to the Director of the National Theatre who immediately hired him to work in the next production, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

It was a great success and other production managers began to use his talents. He worked for St Martin's Theatre for six years and designed over 80 productions in that time.

Garnett Carroll owned the Princess Theatre and commissioned John to design sets and costumes for shows such as *The King and I* and *West Side Story*.

The major opposition theatre company, J.C. Williamson, then asked John to design the set and costumes for *Camelot*. While on this set he began a long friendship with Betty Pounder, a leading choreographer.

John's work received rave reviews and he set out for London to work on *Camelot* again, this time with Robert Helpmann. Again John's work attracted much notice and he then moved to America to work on the film, *Camelot*.

He was often accused of spending large amounts of money to complete his designs but his work was always meticulous and always attracted commendations.

John's work in 1967 on the Warner Brothers film, *Camelot* secured him two Academy Awards, one for costume design and one for art direction. He settled into life in California for a while, even acting in some movies, although he always claimed his home was in Melbourne.

He returned to Melbourne to design the interior of the Victorian Arts Centre; a splendid piece of work. John then went on to develop the Melbourne International Festival, 'Spoleto' which changed the face of Melbourne's public art world.

John was artist in residence at the Victorian Arts Centre when he died aged 57 at the Alfred Hospital and was buried at Emerald Cemetery.



#### Find out more

Nattrass, S. *A Tribute to John Truscott*, [1993]  
John Truscott Design Foundation, visit  
Performing Arts Collection, visit



#### DR JAN PENNEY BA, DIP ED, PHD

Jan is a professional historian who has worked across the fields of heritage, education and tourism. She has taught at several universities, including Monash University where she delivered the master of public history course. She is also a former Chair of the Heritage Council of Victoria. Jan was appointed to The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust in 2010.



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