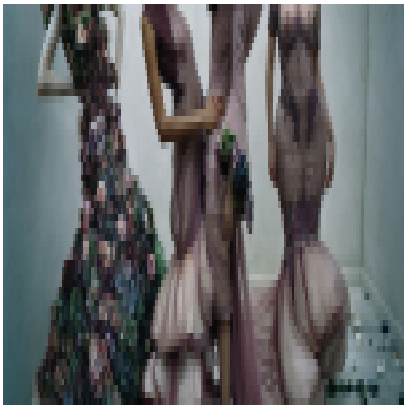


Interview with fresh and upcoming set designer Charlotte Eve Norman

Description

Charlotte Eve Norman is a young British set designer, who loves riding her bike, eats ice cream, and who has justâ?? run her first ultra marathon in the Race to the Stones. In life Charlotte is indeed a rare specimen of a sunny person,â?? the kind of person you are drawn to simply to bathe in the ray of light which quietlyâ?? radiates from this young woman. We met through Run Dem Crew, an East London running community;â?? and although we never quite talked in depth during â??House Warmingâ??, the â??social partâ?? of Run Dem Tuesday night, I wasâ?? always intrigued by her uplifted spirit, knowing that she is still very much building and establishing herself in the industry of set design, with long hours, fierce competition, little money, and possibly scarce rewards. With a growing portfolio of work and contacts, she seems to be quietly walking towards her dream of living a happy life, painting and building with her hands, withâ?? triumphant achievementsâ?? of a firm believer in hard work.
I asked Charlotte if she would be kind enough to share her journeyâ?? with us.



â?? *Charlotte Eve Norman in her element (on the right)*

FS:â?? Who is Charlotte Eve Norman?

CEN: I am a 24 year old country bumpkin living in London and trying to make it in the big city, freelancing as a set designer, set builder and art director.
FS:â?? Tell us a little about how it all started. Are you intuitive with where you were heading, or did you have a solid plan?â??
CEN: Iâ??m not sure I could claim to have had a plan, or to be intuitive! Itâ??s more a case of feeling around in the dark, and after some failed attempts, finding what feels right. I studied French and International Relations at university because my parents encouraged me to pursue a â??sensibleâ?? degree. I thought I was going to work at the United Nations! Then something clicked in me, and I realised I was kidding myself. During my third year (of a four year course) I sent a huge amount of emails and probably annoyed a lot of art directors and set designers in my quest for work and industry experience. Everything went from that first person taking a chance on me.







Pinge AW15 Lookbook/ Charlotte alongside Lianna Fowler created a textured, modernist backdrop to complement the Pinghe collection/ Bottom photo closeup of the background texture

FS:What has been the highlight of your career?

CEN:â?? I moved to London in January 2014 after graduating in August, with the intention of assisting full time and finding a path in this new career. There were a lot of unknowns and it was a very uncertain period. The highlight of my career so far has been reaching January 2015 and seeing my progress over the past year, and knowing that I have been able to support myself doing something that I love.

FS:What important lessons would you advise someone who is thinking of staring out their own creative business?

CEN:â?? Donâ??t rush! Itâ??s so hard because creative industries are just tough, full stop. You will be surrounded by freakishly talented prodigies who are younger than you and are in highly enviably positions, or just people that have different circumstances and are therefore allowed different freedoms. You will definitely at one or more points feel like there is something wrong with your path or your progress compared to those around you who are succeeding. I think my advice would be just to take your time to learn, and try

not to get caught up in the rush of the industry.





Best in the West Editorial for Ballad Of Magazine online/ Set design and Art Direction by Charlotte Eve Norman/ Photographed by Kelly Rose Hammond/ Styled by Thomas Ramshaw

FS:â?? What do you love most about your job?

CEN:â?? Just using my hands to make shapes, forms, absolutely anything â?? I am simply happiest when my hands are busy and I am making. There must be something primal about it, Iâ??m not sure. Itâ??s just the best therapy. Wood is the best; just sanding wood can be such a dream!

FS:â?? What has been challenging?

CEN:â?? The most challenging thing is probably learning to try and not freak out when I have a day with no work, and teaching myself to use those days off productively instead of simply worrying about when the next job will come. Those days off can be such blessings, but you have to let go of the fear.

FS:â?? What does it mean to you to make something by hand from start to finish?

CEN:â?? It really depends what Iâ??m working on. It often begins with discussing concepts and ideas with the photographer or director and then sketches and researching will begin. The creatives I work with are all so different in their approaches, and often my job involves flexing and moulding my process to fit with theirs. The best jobs are when you are involved closely with the photographer or director; when youâ??re there from the very beginning and allowed to see the project through to the very end. Being on set and seeing a shoot come together is such a huge creative pleasure.



Photography by Charlotte Eve Norman/ charlotteevephotography.tumblr.com

FS:â?? Tell us a little about your working environment. Do you share a studio with other creatives? Do you always work with the same team?â??

CEN:â?? My working environment varies hugely. I still assist other designers occasionally, so if Iâ??m doing that I will work at their studios which are predominantly located in Dalston and Hackney. If I am building a set, I could be working out of a photographic studio in Haggerston called Lock Studios. If

Iâ??m art directing, Iâ??ll be hunting around London (or further afield!) for the right prop, or the right carpet for a set, or the right bunch of flowers, or the right teaspoon. Unfortunately I donâ??t have my own studio space yet; for my last job I did a lot of building in my living room, my working environment is constantly changing!







â?? British Vogue, March 2015/ Charlotte assisted Set Designer Emma Roach in the pre-production, realisation, and on-set for Alexander McQueen retrospective/ Photography by Tim Walker/â?? Set build by Andy Knight Ltd.

FS:â?? What would you say is most important lesson for a freelancer?

CEN:â?? The most important lesson is to make yourself memorable, always be the person in the room with the biggest, most toothy grin, and people will remember your name and the fact you did your job well and had good energy. In my experience people will always remember how you made them feel over what you did or what you said. I did a job when I was just starting out where everything, and I mean absolutely everything, went wrong. I couldnâ??t do anything other than try not to panic, smile about it all and solve the problems as best I could. I ended up cheekily enlisting camera assistants and stylists into helping me paint studio boxes. Unbelievably, the producer has booked me twice since, and I can only think it is because I had a positive approach.

FS:â?? Do you have a mentor who guides you?

CEN:â?? I have so many people that I would count as mentors. My father is one, mainly because we are total opposites and he is able to chime in with logical advice when my whirlwind brain is taking over. I also count Lightning and Kinglyfaceâ?? as two of my most influential mentors. I starting assisting them last year, and they have taught me so much, as well as being sources of endless inspiration. The scale of their works really opened my eyes to the possibilities of this career. They are just absolutely wonderful people and they have had a big effect on my work approach.

FS:â?? What does success mean to you?â??

CEN:â?? Iâ??m really not sure. All I know is that I want to work hard, and be happy and contented in my work and my life. I donâ??t want to live to work, but I want to work enough to allow myself a tranquil life. Maybe success just means not having to constantly worry about money and have the freedom to make choices in life.

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