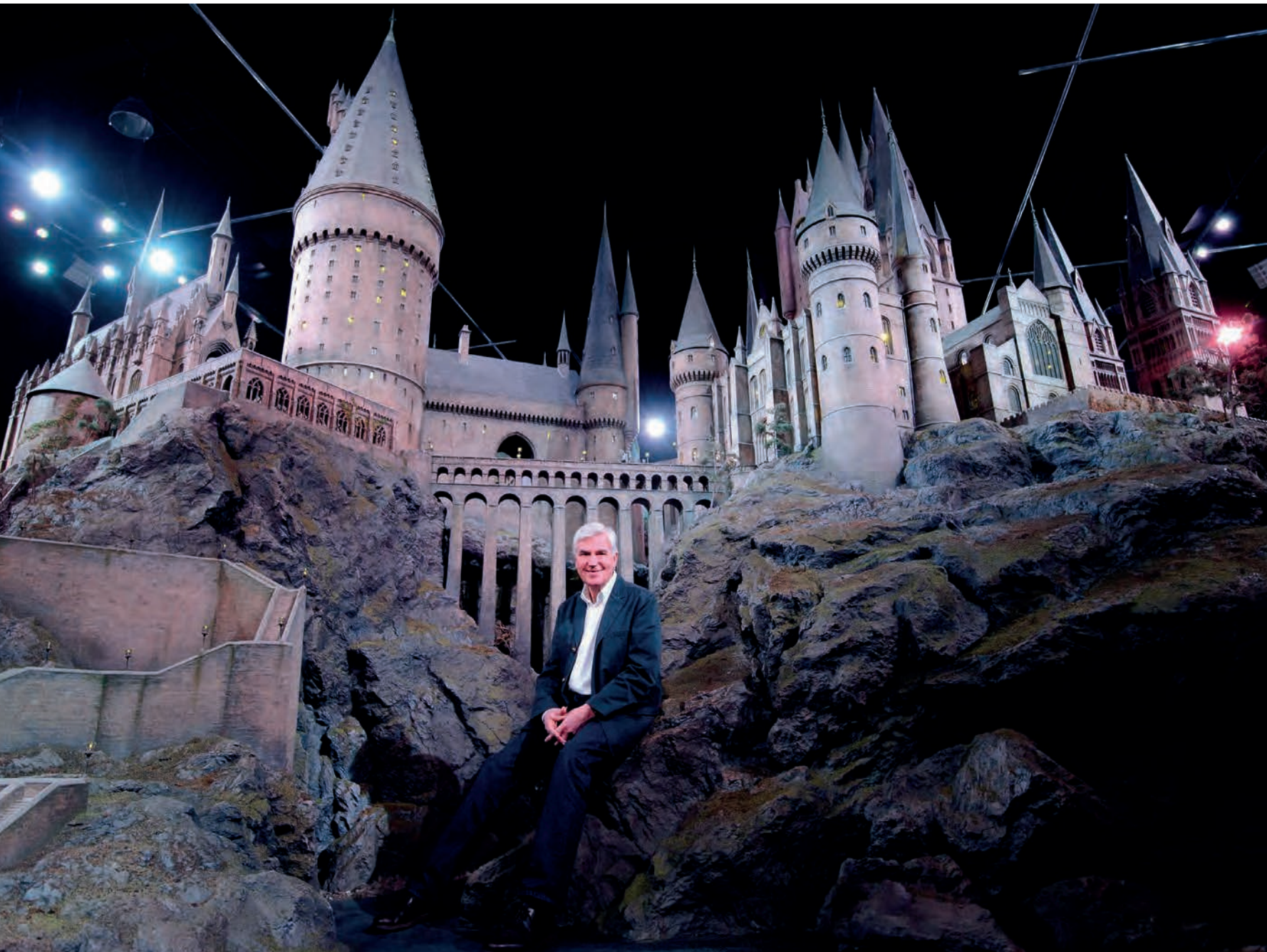


# Stuart Craig

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“You have to be pretty stubborn in this job. You’re forced into compromising situations all the time. You have to be really tough and resilient, hold your position against the real world, against circumstantial things, locations you can’t get, things you can’t afford, conflicting ideas and the doubts of others, whatever it might be. You have to hold on to your idea and hold your ground.”



Born in Norwich, Norfolk, UK in 1942, three-time Academy Award winner Stuart Craig has designed some of modern cinema's most iconic images. For a decade, he was the clear creative line through all eight Harry Potter films, even as the directors changed. Prior to this Craig had already designed **The Elephant Man** (1980), **Gandhi** (1982), **The Mission** (1986), **Cry Freedom** (1987), and **Dangerous Liaisons** (1988). A graduate of the Hornsey College of Art (now Middlesex University) and equipped with a post-graduate degree in film and TV from the Royal College of Art, Craig's entry-level job in the art department was for British designer Michael Stringer on the turbulent **Casino Royale** (the 1967 version featuring David Niven and five credited directors). A total of 12 years learning the craft followed before Craig got his break from the late, great designer John Barry on Barry's also-troubled directorial debut, **Saturn 3** (1990). Much of Craig's work prior to creating Harry Potter's world involves lush and spectacular settings, such as **The Secret Garden** (1993), **Shadowlands** (1993), **Mary Reilly** (1996), and **The English Patient** (1996), but he has also created more modern worlds, including **Notting Hill** (1999) and the 2012 remake of **Gambit** written by the Coen brothers. Other period pieces he has designed include **Memphis Belle** (1990), **Chaplin** (1992), and **The Legend of Bagger Vance** (2000).

Craig wasn't familiar with the bespectacled young wizard Harry Potter when he first got the call from director Chris Columbus. But with some help from creator J.K. Rowling, he grew to know it—and guard it—just as intimately. From the smaller scale of **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone** (2001) to the grand finale of **Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part II** (2011), Craig worked with four directors over the eight films, creating magnificent sets, and reinvigorating the British filmcraft industry, the results of which can be seen today at the Warner Bros Studios in Leavesden.

Craig has won three Academy Awards for **Gandhi**, **Dangerous Liaisons**, and **The English Patient**. He has also been nominated a further seven times and is a Royal Designer for Industry.



# Stuart Craig

“ You have to be pretty stubborn in this job. You’re forced into compromising situations all the time. You have to be really tough and resilient, hold your position against the real world, against circumstantial things, locations you can’t get, things you can’t afford, conflicting ideas and the doubts of others, whatever it might be. You have to hold onto your idea and hold your ground.

I struggle to get an idea and that’s probably fortunate because if you had a dozen ideas for everything and you were indecisive, that would be just dreadful. If you have only the one and know you’ve just got to hang on and go for it, it’s actually quite a healthy starting point. Often I’ve sat in front of a blank sheet of paper and thought, what am I going to do here? It’s quite frightening when you sit at the drawing board and you don’t have an idea in your head. And you just make a mark and rub it out, make two marks and rub one out, and then on you go. I can eventually find my way through. You need to be fully awake in this job and if a little bit of fright keeps you fully awake, then that’s good.

I’d been working in the art department for 12 years when I got my first job as a designer on **Saturn 3** [directed by John Barry]. [He] had designed **A Clockwork Orange**, the first **Star Wars**, and **Superman**, and I’m sure he felt comfortable that if I had not come up to the mark he could have done it himself in the evenings very easily—he was so able. He died at 43 from meningitis. **Saturn 3** ended unhappily, but it was a big break for me and I’ve quoted John’s maxim ever since: that is, when it comes to designing a set, to have one idea, only one idea, at the very most, have two. If you have any more than that, you dilute the whole thing drastically and lose touch with anything good.

I remember having a revelation that I wanted to be a production designer when I heard Ken Adam speak at the Royal College of Art—he won’t remember, but I do. He’d already done **Dr. No** and **From Russia With Love**, so had made his mark pretty spectacularly. He drew up in a splendid white Rolls Royce convertible, with a big cigar. Working at Adam’s level in the film

industry seemed a completely unobtainable ambition, you just didn’t think it was possible, but nonetheless I was inspired and scenery has been my thing for a very long time.

As a boy, I went to a school where there was a tradition of doing Gilbert & Sullivan. I was painting the walls of the Tower of London for *The Yeoman of the Guard* when somebody—a member of staff—behind me appreciated it, and complimented me on the solidity of my masonry. These little things flip a switch inside and I was enjoying myself hugely, so while still at school, I started theater design. My hometown is Norwich in Norfolk; there was a good amateur theater there called the Maddermarket Theatre with an Elizabethan stage, so I used to paint there for two complimentary tickets a week.

I carried on working in theater, went to the local art school to do fine art, and continued onto Hornsey in North London and then, as art students do, I applied to the Royal College of Art as a post-graduate, and the film and TV design course, as it was then, seemed appropriate with my stage experience. So that was the switch to film in 1963. Everybody else wanted to direct, but I hung onto my thing, I wanted to design.

01 David Lynch’s *The Elephant Man* (1980)



**“I remember having a revelation that I wanted to be a production designer when I heard Ken Adam speak at the Royal College of Art—he won’t remember, but I do.”**

Union restrictions in the film industry were quite severe in those days, but coming out of the Royal College of Art, a friend and I applied to a good British designer, Michael Stringer, who was designing the film **Casino Royale** (1967), and we both got a job immediately. That film was in complete disarray, but it was a fantastic job to learn the business of the art department. I was making the tea, doing the blueprints. I did a long apprenticeship, bad films mostly. After exactly 12 years, I got a chance to design a film.

I was scared to begin with—I’m still scared—but certainly toward the end of that 12 years, I was desperate to have a go, I was really pushing to have a go. I was lucky too—my second film was **The Elephant Man** and then **Gandhi**, and by that time I had very good art directors—Robert Laing and Norman Dorme, both older and more experienced than myself. I surrounded myself with very good people—no point in trying to look good against not-so-good people.

I met [set decorator] Stephanie McMillan on the movie **Chaplin**, which was part set in America and part staged in England, and she did the English sets. Every film since then I’ve done with Stephanie. It’s inconceivable frankly that I →

## **Finding locations and building into those locations**

(02–03) **Gandhi**: “It is the nature of doing something so ambitious in India at that time (1982) that you ended up with not your second best location, not your third best, but your fourth and fifth best sometimes...but [director] Richard Attenborough’s greatest achievement was to just get it made, an extraordinary achievement,” recalls Craig. Spending 11 months in India, Craig became very involved with the Indian film industry, hiring a local art director to help on the ground. “Ram Yedekar was straight from the Bollywood tradition, but he was the most terrific man for us, and he worked with Norman Dorme and Bob Laing, who were far more experienced than I was.” As Craig recalls, the shoot played to his favorite parts of production design work. “I particularly love finding locations and building into those locations—so I loved building Gandhi’s ashram on a beautiful bend in the Jumna River outside Delhi where you actually use the landscape and build into it. I think it’s the most satisfying process there ever was. I suppose architects have that experience often, but production designers have it too.”

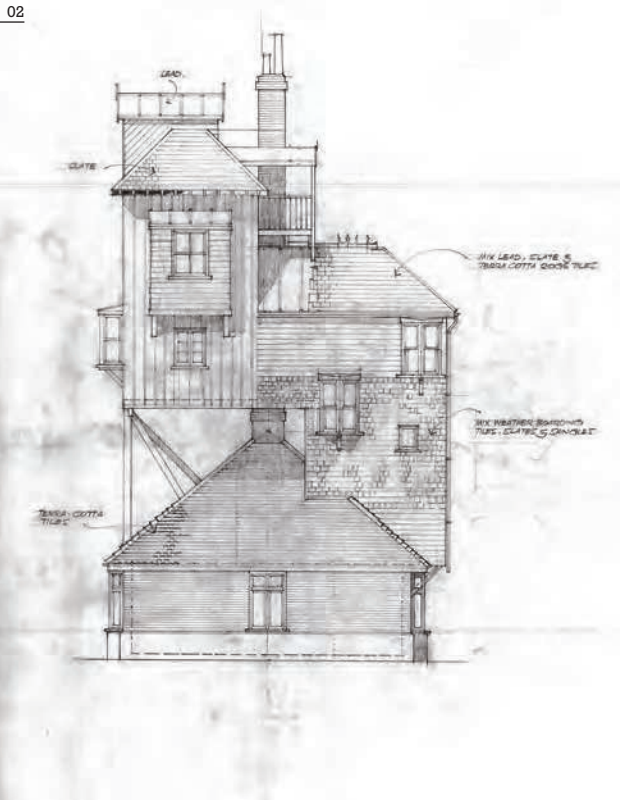




“J.K. Rowling has a very descriptive style, layer upon layer of detail. The instruction is clear. My first meeting with her, she made a map for me of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade. It showed the position of the station, the dark forest, the gates, Hogsmeade village and that became invaluable—it was the ultimate authority, this piece of paper, that I kept and referred to throughout the ten-year period.”

**DUMBLEDORE’S OFFICE**

(01) The inspiration for Dumbledore’s office in the Harry Potter series was quite simple, according to Craig, and it was, possibly, his favorite set of the eight films, although it’s hard to choose. “It actually came from the English paperback of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. It had an illustration on the cover of a very simple castle form, but it did have this conical roof and three little turrets on it, and that was the inspiration.” The result was very pleasing to the designer. “I did like Dumbledore’s office very much. I liked the fact that it was on the edge of credibility. That it was three turrets, one on top of the other, that cantilevered off the building, off this big tower. It had an element of fantasy about it and yet was very much in the spirit of the rest of Hogwarts, rich, crumbling medieval masonry and richly textured with leather-bound books, astronomical instruments, rich fabrics.”



**THE WEASLEY HOUSE**

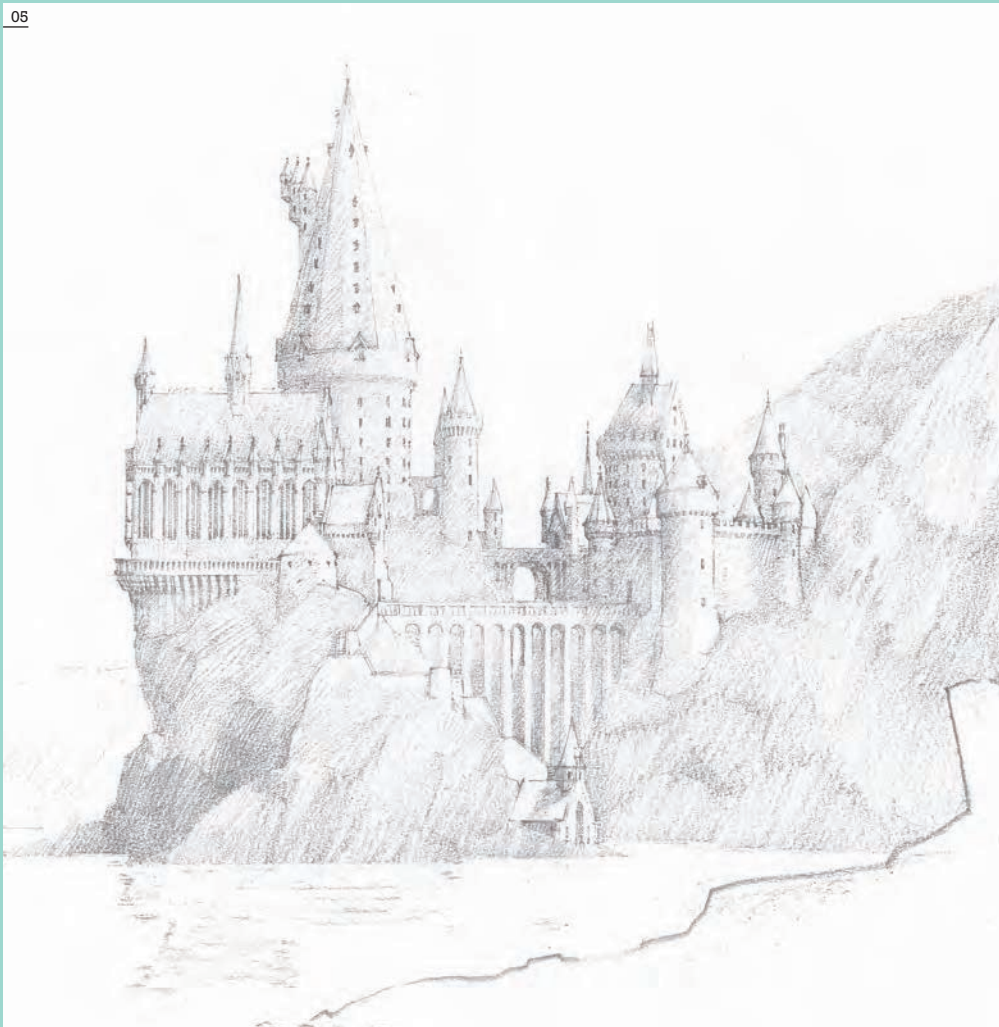
(02–03) “This is the Weasley house and where it started for me is a simple plan. I like to do measured plans and elevations,” recalls Craig of the structure, also known as The Burrow, which became the headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix.



04



05



## HOGWARTS / DIAGON ALLEY

(04–07) “This was my first sketch of Hogwarts (05), just a simple pencil sketch, then it became compromised by bits of Durham Cathedral, bits of Gloucester Cathedral, but I quite like the silhouette of this,” recalls Craig. “And this is Diagon Alley (04), again, my first sketch.” Working on all eight films gave Craig the opportunity to revisit some of his earlier work—much of the location work in the first film would be replaced by set builds as the budgets and ambition increased along with the series’ popularity. “All those real locations from the first film, when it came to long shots and wide shots of Hogwarts and the landscape, they didn’t sit particularly well together,” recalls Craig. “The very complicated skyline that they gave you was not something you would have designed. So I spent the next ten years revisiting that skyline film by film and making all sorts of improvements along the way. There were some dictated by the script, for example, Dumbledore dies by falling out of the astronomy tower, so we needed an astronomy tower—great. So over eight films and ten years, we did make considerable changes. I’m certainly more pleased with the last one than the first. It did get better and better.”

06



07





“We went to Colombia and Argentina to make **The Mission** and it was a real physical experience. We shot at Iguazú and it was just exhausting climbing every day, thank God they sent lunch up. You really knew you’d done something, you’d lived the life.”

would do a film without her—she is absolutely an integral part. She makes up for my shortcomings, complements what I do absolutely. She has impeccable taste, she has a real sense of elegance, and I consult with her on color all the time, prop-making—buying and hiring, of course, but more than that, the color, mood, etc. Neil Lamont has been the supervising art director with me since **The English Patient** (1996). He has grown up in a film family—lived with film all his life. Nobody is more knowledgeable, energetic and organized. Andrew Williamson is a brilliant architectural illustrator who came to us on the Harry Potter films. His style has become more theatrical and expressionistic, to great effect, as the series progressed.

The time-honored method of working is to make a production sketch—sketch the master shot of a scene, and that would become the instruction to the draftsman who would do the construction drawing and also make a model for discussion with the director about the set. But over the years, I’ve done fewer and fewer of those highly rendered production sketches, and what I like to do now is start with a couple of rough pencil sketches then get straight to the measured plan, but also sections, elevations to scale—in other words, do a preliminary draftsman’s construction drawing. I like to get into real specifics very quickly and I want to know exactly how big the room is—heights and proportions are critical and unless you draw it to scale, you can miscalculate. Because I spent those 12 years as an architectural draftsman, I find it reassuring starting from that position.

I’ve always seen my job as being about an ability to make pictures, though, and I think I haven’t strayed very far from my fine art background in that way. I appreciate the importance of pre-viz and animatic and so on, but I still see it as a series of still images basically. As a designer you need that ability to make pictures, an eye for composition. So from my point of view, a fine art course is the perfect precursor to a career in production design.

Some of those early films I did were made the

old-fashioned way, where the film crew actually went and lived the adventure. I went to India for **Gandhi** (1982) and stayed there 11 months and became immersed in India and India’s film industry. We went to Colombia and Argentina to make **The Mission** (1986) and it was a real physical experience. We shot at Iguazú and it was just exhausting climbing every day, thank God they sent lunch up. You really knew you’d done something, you’d lived the life.

There was a kind of a halfway house on the early Harry Potter films because they were on location, but the locations were much less exotic—Durham Cathedral, Gloucester Cathedral, Christ Church College, Oxford. I think anybody born in the UK has a sense of what Hogwarts might look like. Eton looks like it. Harrow looks like it. Westminster looks like it. But we did decide very early on that Hogwarts was in Scotland. So we went to the Highlands, and the most spectacular places there are the Glencoe Pass, Glen Nevis and Loch Sheil. Hagrid’s hut was in Glencoe and the quidditch field at the back of Hogwarts was in Glen Nevis. And you

**01** The quidditch field at the back of Hogwarts in **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** (2002)







climbed up to the wooden bridge that connects Hagrid's hut to the back of Hogwarts castle—that's some climb. As the ten years went on, my age began to show.

The first film was full of real locations, because we couldn't afford to build the entire world. When we did start to build sets, those physical locations became the reference point for the built sets, so they were probably more real and less fantasy than they might have been. For the later films, we didn't go to Christ Church and we barely went to Scotland. We had a vast amount of sets on the back-lot—sets standing on all the stages, common rooms and dormitories and the great hall, the dark arts classroom, Dumbledore's office, all stood there permanently for years. Hogwarts itself was a miniature for the first six

films, a huge physical miniature on a big soundstage at Shepperton, and is now part of the exhibition at Leavesden. Then when it came to the final battle at Hogwarts, Tim Burke, the visual effects chief, said it's time to make a digital model. I was dubious—there is a great tradition of physical miniatures—but we scanned the original model and that became the structure of the new model. That scan gave us the wireframe and we retextured it with real stone masonry and real rock textures, and these were of such high resolution that we could go much closer than ever before with the camera—take the camera right into it, right up to doors, windows, it was much better than the miniature.

I got the call to go to America and meet Chris Columbus for the first film when I was at home →

**02** *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), directed by Chris Columbus



**“It’s quite frightening when you sit at the drawing board and you don’t have an idea in your head. And you just make a mark and rub it out, make two marks and rub one out, and then on you go.”**

decorating my as-yet unborn grandson’s bedroom. He’s 11 years old now, and we saw the last film together. I went to the local bookshop and got the books—there were only two—and got on the plane the next day. J.K. Rowling has a very descriptive style, layer upon layer of detail. The instruction is clear. My first meeting with her, she made a map for me of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade. It showed the position of the station, the dark forest, the gates, Hogsmeade village and that became invaluable—it was the ultimate authority, this piece of paper, that I kept and referred to throughout the ten-year period.

I was there from the very beginning, right to the last day of filming. I’m still on it now! [Craig has worked on the Harry Potter theme park in Florida and the studio tour in Leavesden]. I did say to all the directors that they didn’t have to have me. It might have been very interesting for someone to pick it up and reinvent it. What made it really work for me is that we did change director and they were so different. J.K. Rowling was gracious enough to say she liked it and the world seemed to like it, but you had to be on your toes. We were shooting once outside

Hagrid’s hut in Black Path when a little girl came up to me and said: “That’s not Hagrid’s hut, Hagrid’s hut is made of wood and this is made of stone! It has to catch fire!” So I took her inside and I said “you are right, but look at the roof, the roof is made entirely of wood and the floor is made entirely of wood, and the windows and the doors and all the furniture, believe me, this will make one hell of a fire.” She was somewhat mollified, but it wasn’t just J.K. Rowling you had to please, there were millions of kids around the world who knew it better than you did.

It was quite emotional at the end, really, it was. And that’s unusual on a set. Very strange indeed. After the last take of the last shot, when the first assistant director said, “that’s it, check the gate,” there wasn’t a dry eye in the house, truly. But I’m glad to move on now, glad to have wrapped it up and done it all.

Straight away after that, I did **Gambit** (2012), a small film for Michael Hoffman with Colin Firth. I just needed to change, just to prove, not to the world but to myself, that I could do a low-budget film that was more connected to the real world. It was the best thing I could have done. ”



01

01 Jeremy Irons and Robert De Niro in **The Mission** (1986)

02



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## THE ENGLISH PATIENT

(02–04) There's finding a desert and finding a movie desert, according to Craig, and the search for **The English Patient's** crucial locations was key to the overall success of the movie. "We were looking for uninterrupted sandy deserts, the iconic image of endless sand dunes. And they had to be the right color sand. I tried Morocco, but you never quite get away from the scrub—you climb up magnificent sand, look over the top and there's scrub. You can never leave the scrub. The same in Tunisia, but Tunisia did have this very beautiful light-colored sand, it was very romantic and it was about the sand and, in many respects, that sandstorm, the isolation in that wrecked car in the sand dunes. It needed romantic staging, so we bulldozed sand dunes for days, till they were a movie set, and built up the intermediate mound so you didn't see the scrub on the horizon (04)."

The search for Cairo's Shepherd Hotel, destroyed by the city's great fire of 1952 and later rebuilt, was also exhaustive. "We had to be in Italy, or it could have been Tunisia, for production purposes, and I went the length and breadth of both countries looking for a suitable Shepherd Hotel," recalls Craig, "Then I remembered the **Death in Venice** hotel on the Venice Lido [the Hotel Des Bains]. So we thought, ok, the Adriatic can become the River Nile, and they allowed us to remove their sign and put up a Shepherd Hotel sign, so it went well, but it took some finding." Other key interiors, however, such as the desert cave in which Kirstin Scott-Thomas's character dies (03), or the chapel interior where Juliette Binoche looks at the frescoes, were sets built at Rome's Cinecittà Studios. (02) Craig's concept artwork for Almasý's [Ralph Fiennes] apartment.

03



04

