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Welcome Jade, DWR's drafts woman & queen of all things paper!



When Jade Manicom applied for a draftsman position at DWR Distribution, she light-heartedly typed 'Drafts(wo)man' in the subject line and pressed send, honestly believing someone more qualified in Vectorworks would be appointed. It now gives DWR great pleasure to welcome Jade to the team – a creative individual known for her lighting design, programming and drawing skills.

"I knew I wanted to be in theatre from the age of nine," she recalls. "My mom took our family to watch *Cats* at the State Theatre's Opera House in Pretoria, and all I wanted to know was where the cats were going when they went through the tunnels and backstage." For the entire show, she sat fascinated.

When deciding where to study, Jade chose Rhodes University in Makhanda (formally Grahamstown). "I had an idea that I needed to study drama after school as I wanted to understand the performance side as well as well as backstage, so I decided on a place I thought had a strong performance programme," she explains. In the first week of her first year, she boldly walked up to an Honours student and said, "I know you have to put on a show. I'll be your stage manager!" and she never stopped being involved. The annual National Arts Festival, hosted in the arty town was also a major factor in her decision and is where she gained a lot of her practical experience.

After graduating, Jade entered the live events industry as a freelancer. Her very first gig was with Keystone Productions, an audio, lighting, staging, and video production company that she ended up working for. "They kept me around for three months then offered me a job," she says. "I learned so much and through them, the world of live entertainment opened up to me. I had tunnel vision with a focus on theatre and they helped me see the theatrical side of events. The world of drawing and design, rendering and pre-programming gave me a new avenue to explore and I loved this even more."

Jade had already developed a passion for lighting at university but learning and applying pre-programming enabled her to establish the structure of a production so that by the time programmers went to site, the foundation was already there, and it was about adding those extra layers in the lighting to make the show pop. “The workflow was very interesting and new, and again I just fell in love with it,” she adds.

After five years, Jade decided to leave Keystone, wanting to take time out to travel and explore. “But that’s when the world stopped for everybody,” she refers to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, she moved from Johannesburg to stay with her family in the Cape, and found herself working as a content script writer, creating e-learning courses mainly around compliance and training.

Said Robert Izzett of DWR, “We’ve known Jade for years, especially with all her work at Keystone Productions. It’s wonderful to have another lighting person join the team. Her experience in lighting shows will be invaluable for DWR going forward.”

The role of draftsman at DWR formerly belonged to Dylan Jones, who is now taking on a new position in the sales team. “I never imagined that I’d be working at DWR,” smiles Jade. “It’s amazing and it’s a strange path that led this way. Now I’m back to doing drawings which I love! Life always, always surprises me. Every time I think I have an idea of what I’m going to be doing, it shifts. This was not my original point B, yet now I wonder how this was not my original B as everything points this way.”

With vast experience in MyShowDesigner and Sketchup, Jade started learning Vectorworks in 2020. “I understand the cohesion and process needed for a design,” she says valuing the way the software helps people understand designs on paper and in space. And with experience as a lighting designer, she can have the creative vision in mind and work backwards to put all the pillars in place and make the design come to life.

In her spare time, Jade’s a self-declared bookworm and enjoys going for walks. “I wish my hobby was piano playing but I’m still trying to save up for one,” she says, laughing. While she has a list of movies and series to catch up on, more often than not, her book wins!