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please

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Statement of Purpose
Dear reader, I know you must have read about 7 tonnes of statements by now, but I implore you to remain conscious just long enough to read one more. Please and thank you. My name is Shane Collis, I am 26 years old, from Perth, Western Australia. I was born into a modest, lower-middle-class existence on September twenty-eighth, nineteen hundred and ninety-one. After attending kindergarten (affectionately referred to by the local urchins as “kindy”) I survived two miserable years of primary school before my mother made the decision to liberate my young brain from the state-funded mind laundry and home-school me. I suppose she decided that if my budding intellect was going to be under the tutelage of an irrational adult it may as well be in my own home. Squirring under the well-intentioned jackboot of my mother’s makeshift classroom, I suffered through English and maths. Whilst quietly hoping a violent death had befallen the men who’d invented letters and numerals.

My maternal grandparents moved in with us when I was ten years old. My grandmother died of cancer in 2004 and my parents divorced in 2007. A year later my grandfather was diagnosed with lung cancer. While my mother worked during the day, the responsibility of looking after my grandfather fell to me. Due to my responsibility as a caregiver, I had little time or opportunity to seek employment or formal education. As a teenager, I began to educate myself on a variety of subjects. I was interested in history, particularly World War Two.

I was able to further my self-education via Film and Television. Actively seeking out films and documentaries whilst learning as much as I could. I continue to have eclectic interests and I feel that could inform my work as a

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filmmaker. Since the majority of my knowledge was obtained through my own efforts and spurred by my interests, I could be considered an autodidact. As I mentioned previously, I was unable to look for work while looking after my grandfather. So I began searching for ways I could work from home.

By that time I had a good knowledge of film and a large DVD collection as a result. I put this to use and created a successful small business. What began as a way to downsize my personal DVD collection, developed into a steady source of income and taught me useful management skills. 5 years after starting a business from my bedroom, I have grown a sizable customer base and deal with customers from all over the world. I knew I wanted to be a filmmaker from the age of thirteen. It was then I discovered two films: Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, and Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*. Watching those films in quick succession helped me to understand what a director is.

I began to learn what all the jobs in the credits were and recognized names from film to film. When I discovered *Reservoir Dogs*, I was entranced by the dialogue. The way the characters talked to each other and expressed themselves was mesmerizing to this thirteen-year-old. I had never heard characters talk that way before. It made me understand how important a screenplay was and how a writer can invent and shape a film.

It was a revelation. I was used to the standard family fare and the occasional action movie from the video store. Tarantino's film felt like an atomic blast had occurred in my living room. I also discovered Martin Scorsese around the

same time. I had caught sight of a stunningly shot scene from Goodfellas and was transfixed.

Scorsese's work has an indefinable energy that radiates off the screen. The balletic camera movement, rhythmic editing and unique use of music all combine to cast a spell over the viewer. Not only are Scorsese's films a massive influence on me, but his encyclopedic knowledge of film history and generosity in sharing it served me well as a young cinephile. His mentioning a film hitherto unknown to me would send me scrambling to locate a copy. Through his recommendations, I discovered Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, Luchiano Visconti, Samuel Fuller, Vincente Minnelli and also gained a deeper understanding of Alfred Hitchcock's work.

I began to seek out films by these directors. Spending whatever free time I had watching films, reading about them and trying to learn as much as I could. Turner Classic Movies broadened the scope of my film-watching and I became enamored with the Golden Age of Hollywood. Discovering silents, pre-code, screwball comedies, melodramas, film noir, westerns, and musicals. I soon realized that the modern films I had previously been exposed to paled in comparison to the astonishing artistry and craftsmanship of Classical Hollywood Cinema.

I still cannot fathom how such a glorious artistic period could possibly have existed in the same world I was born into. The stunning photography, sets, costumes and the genuinely witty and intelligent scripts opened up a whole other dimension. A dimension of beauty both tranquil and violent that unbeknownst to me, had existed parallel to my own. I enjoy learning about

the history of cinema. It's epochal beginnings, innovations and the people who made them possible.

I like to read film history books and the writing of Kevin Brownlow, Jeanine Basinger, David Bordwell, Eddie Muller and Farran Smith Nehme. In fact, I was so inspired by Nehme's work that I started my own film blog and have had several articles published in print. I have written pieces about Billy Wilder, Peter Bogdanovich, Paul Newman, and Ida Lupino among others. I have a great many ideas not only for films but for theater also.

I have been working on a stage play that has a late 1940's period setting and deals with the issue of WW2 servicemen returning home after the war. I don't think it's a subject that has been presented on the stage in such a style. I hope to present it in a way that casts a husband and wife as metaphors for the American experience of the time. The husband representing the returning soldier, with all his scars both mental and physical. And the wife representing the home front, those left behind to worry, work and wonder. Compassionately depicting the difficult adjustment faced by the men who had been at war, the women they came home to and the effects on society as a whole.

I hope to have it produced one day if at all possible. My influences are quite varied. Filmmakers: Martin Scorsese, Todd Haynes, Kelly Reichardt, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Andrea Arnold, Billy Wilder, David Lynch, Fritz Lang, Quentin Tarantino, Peter Bogdanovich, Ken Loach, Alfred Hitchcock, Anna Biller, Mikhail Kalatozov, Ida Lupino and Douglas Sirk. Writers: Rod Serling, Billy Wilder, Charles Brackett, I. A. L Diamond, James L.

Brooks, Jess Oppenheimer, Richard Matheson and Anita Loos. Animators: Walt Disney, Matt Groening, Chuck Jones, Jim Davis and Bill Watterson. Comedians such as Don Rickles, Lucille Ball, Jack Benny, Jerry Seinfeld, Bill Maher, Amy Poehler, Carol Burnett, Johnny Carson, Bill Burr, Tina Fey and Maria Bamford. And Musicians: Mark Knopfler, David Byrne, Jo Stafford, Iris Dement, Johnny Cash, Cab Calloway, Bob Dylan, Nanci Griffith and Bruce Springsteen. In recent years, I have noticed Australian film to be severely lacking in output and creativity.

There have been times of great excitement and promise, yet sadly I feel our national cinema as a form of artistic expression and cultural identity has all but disappeared. Imagination appears to have stagnated and the number of films being produced seems to get smaller every year. The formulaic comedies and overproduced musicals that have been defecated out of the almost non-existent industry are nothing more than a depressing reminder of the dire circumstances Australian cinema finds itself in. I would like to instigate or at the very least be a part of a resurgence. To help usher in a new-wave and redefine Australian film in the 21st century.

I feel the need to issue something of a manifesto like the New German filmmakers of the 1960's. Or a call to arms asking creative minds of all fields to lend their talents to the screen. I am tired of Australian movie theaters assaulting their all too forgiving patrons with overrated, overhyped trash that nobody either side of Ayers Rock truly gives a damn about. When I become a filmmaker, I don't want to make the next Marvel or Disney merchandise advertisement.

I don't want to lobby sweaty-palmed producers for a chance to fill the mechanical role of director on a project I have no control of, nor any real desire to make. I want to make films that will put the rest of the world on notice. To turn heads, divert eyes and help return cinema to its rightful place among the arts. As vital to our culture as the work of the great writers, painters, sculptors, poets, and musicians. This is how I genuinely feel about modern cinema and the need to save it from itself.

My favorite Australian filmmaker in recent years is Cate Shortland. Her film *Somersault* (2004) renewed my hope that a distinctive voice could succeed in this country. I don't recall an Australian film that had such vivid characters and location shooting. The dialogue is unlike anything I have heard in Australian cinema. So often scripts are written without consideration for the natural accent and cadence of Australian voices.

Shortland was able to avoid the pitfalls of most films and TV shows and depict a particular slice of Australian life with striking accuracy. This kind of risk-taking and unconventional storytelling is a prime example of what I feel Australian cinema is currently lacking. I would very much like to help revitalize the industry and instill a sense of identity and purpose I feel it surely needs. Hopefully, with the training I would receive at Swinburne I will be able to lend my time and talent to help carve out a place for Australia in the landscape of world cinema. When in the right hands, cinema can be a powerful educational tool.

It can bring sights, sounds, thoughts, and feelings from another time and place directly into your own. It is very rarely utilized in this manner today

and seldom seen as anything other than a product to sell. Cinema is a magical thing that I feel has been corrupted by greed. And In my own small way, I hope to change that for the better. While I recognize the business element of filmmaking and the need for astute management of financial resources, I think a balance can be found between profitability and artistic expression.

After all, producing quality films is paramount to the success of any filmmaker regardless of their career goals, and I aim to make distinctive films that will appeal to audiences senses and emotions as well as their wallets. My experience of building a small business from nothing has given me a useful business acumen that I think will come in handy in the world of independent film. I became aware of Swinburne's film & television program via a friend who recommended the school. I was very impressed when I researched the University and excited about the possibility of attending. I am particularly excited about the chance to work with 16MM & 35MM film. Though digital is efficient and many find it easier to work with, I think film has a stronger visual quality and greater photographic possibilities. The photochemical process allows the filmmaker to interpret a story much differently than the pixels that make up a digital image. I would very much like to experiment with 16MM film, produce short silent and sound narrative films, documentaries and possibly animation.

I would love to learn about cinematography and lighting as well as editing and sound production. Though my main ambition is to become a director, I would not be disappointed if the direction my career takes were that of a

cinematographer. I am very inspired by the work of John Alton, James Wong Howe, William Daniels, Roger Deakins, Robert Richardson, Gordon Willis, Carlo Di Palma and Jack Cardiff. The facilities at Swinburne are considered the best in Australia, and I am very much looking forward to putting them to use realizing my projects and assisting others with theirs. I would be very happy to have opportunities to work in crew roles to help others produce films. I understand filmmaking to be a collaborative art and would value the experience of serving in any number of roles.

I feel I would be very suited to the environment as I have a strong sense of dedication and good work ethic. I am efficient, punctual and would take great pleasure in assisting others. No matter what direction my education and future career takes, I will work extremely hard and not for a single second will I take the opportunity for granted. Thank you for your time
Yours,
sincerely and respectfully
Shane Collis (Hopeful applicant)