

The Coin Collector – Short Film

Victor Torres



TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

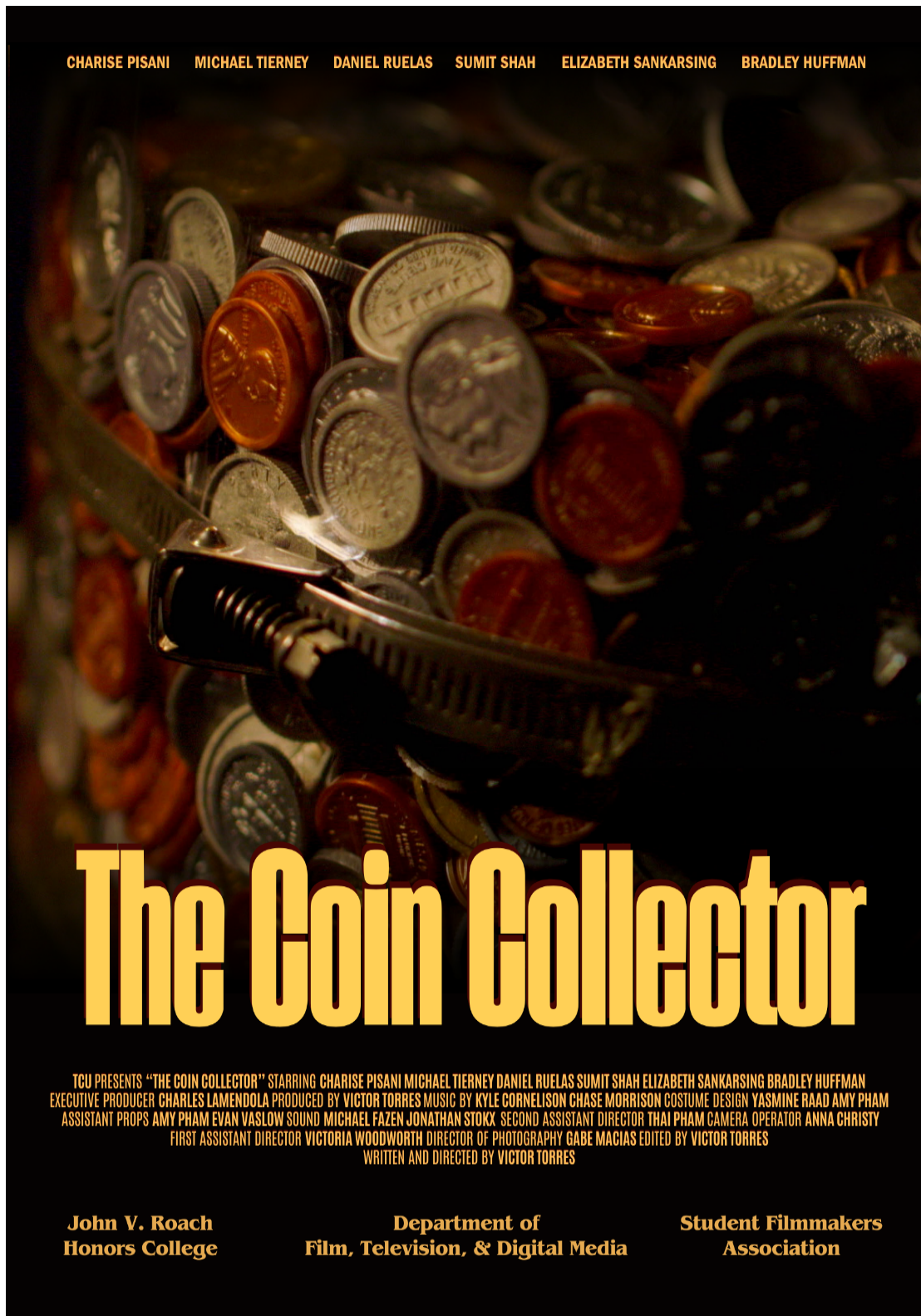
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LINK TO FINAL FILM

<https://youtu.be/CUX0FSnUh1U>



CHARISE PISANI MICHAEL TIERNEY DANIEL RUELAS SUMIT SHAH ELIZABETH SANKARSING BRADLEY HUFFMAN

The Coin Collector

TCU PRESENTS "THE COIN COLLECTOR" STARRING CHARISE PISANI MICHAEL TIERNEY DANIEL RUELAS SUMIT SHAH ELIZABETH SANKARSING BRADLEY HUFFMAN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CHARLES LAMENDOLA PRODUCED BY VICTOR TORRES MUSIC BY KYLE GORNELISON CHASE MORRISON COSTUME DESIGN YASMINE RAAD AMY PHAM
ASSISTANT PROPS AMY PHAM EVAN VASLOW SOUND MICHAEL FAZEN JONATHAN STOKX SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR THAI PHAM CAMERA OPERATOR ANNA CHRISTY
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR VICTORIA WOODWORTH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GABE MACIAS EDITED BY VICTOR TORRES
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY VICTOR TORRES

**John V. Roach
Honors College**

**Department of
Film, Television, & Digital Media**

**Student Filmmakers
Association**

PRODUCTION HISTORY



Project Origin

Early Development

This project began when I was first working on an annotated bibliography with Richard Allen, where I studied the history of screenplay development. Early on, I had pitched the idea of making the second half of my departmental honors fulfillment focus on producing an original short film through the FTDM department. I had made a handful of short films in the past with the Student Filmmakers Association, and I wanted to try my hand at something bigger. We then brought Charles LaMendola and Chantel Carlson onto the project, and under their guidance, I began developing a film based on a short script I had written titled *The Coin Collector*.

Premise

Since its inception, *The Coin Collector* always followed the story of a handful of people talking in a diner one night, sharing tall tales about a mysterious man named “The Coin Collector,” who is said to wander the streets at night with a giant canister of coins on his back. The project started when I one day drew a strange man with a giant glass backpack filled with coins. I began asking questions about who this character could be. What was his backstory? What was his perspective on life? These questions became the foundation of the script, as the story centers around these characters debating their different perspectives on the mysterious urban legend. One sees him as a ghost. Another views him as a dangerous hermit. Others believe

him to be a superhero. But as the story unfolds, we discover that the mysterious Coin Collector's true identity blurs the line between fact and fiction.

Pre-Production

After a few months of trying out different drafts and directions for the story, we finally settled on a screenplay that was around 20 pages long. With this, we could finally begin pre-production. Pre-production is the planning stage of filmmaking. This includes script breakdowns, crew assembly, casting, location scouting, budgeting, storyboarding, prop building, and costume designing.

Assembling a Crew

Producing a short film requires a crew. My Executive Producer was Charles LaMendola, who helped us set deadlines for shooting the film. Planning the actual shoot was in my hands as Director and Producer of the film. To complete this complicated project, I worked with Gabriel Macias as my Director of Photography, who is in charge of creating the look of the film, and Victoria Woodworth as my Assistant Director, who is in charge of organizing our actors, crew, and schedules.



Casting

A film cannot exist without actors to bring a script's characters to life. For this project, we had the incredible opportunity to work with a professional acting studio in Dallas run by Nancy Chartier, a friend of TCU. Those who audition will read a brief portion of the script (this script portion is called a side). This helps us understand if the auditioner fits the role. An example of one of our auditions can be seen below.

<https://youtu.be/glHzZQozUNw>



Location Scouting

We then needed to figure out where we would be shooting our film. *The Coin Collector* required a handful of locations, including a diner, a bridge, a bus stop, a river, a neighborhood, a house, and an alleyway. The purpose of location scouting is to figure out the logistics of filming at any given location, including where to plug in lights, where people are going to park, how audio will sound, what time of day the shoot will take place, and permit requirements. Not a single moment of a scene can begin shooting until you have answers to all of these questions.



Budgeting

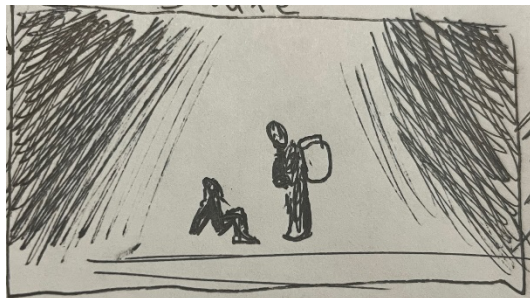
Movies cost a lot of money. A key step of pre-production is listing out every prop, costume, equipment, and space rental on a spreadsheet such as the one below. The entirety of our funding came from the Honors Department, with the film requiring a budget of about \$2,400.

1	Total Grant Funds:	\$2,200			
2	Grant Funds Left as of 3/4/24:	\$1,583.83			
3					
4	Purchases	Price	Details	Date	Status
5					
6	Purchases Covered By Grant Funds				
7	Apeturent Order 1	\$760.94	Lighting, Camera Body, Audio	2-13-24	REIMBURSED
8	Apeturent Order 2	\$450.86	Dolly, Tracks, Tripod, C-Stands*	2-16-24	REIMBURSED
9					
10	Amazon: Order #111-2616505-2513822	\$12.42	Metallic Spray Paint	1-27-24	REIMBURSED
11	Amazon: Order #111-8931451-0365065	\$32.46	Disc Launcher, Toy Gun	1-27-24	REIMBURSED
12	Amazon: Order #114-7410309-2057812	\$35.16	China Balls and Sockets	1-30-24	REIMBURSED
13	Amazon: Order #114-9700303-6615443	\$19.41	China Ball	1-30-24	REIMBURSED
14	Amazon: Order #114-8035485-1477010	\$32.45	Disk Launcher	2-3-24	REIMBURSED
15	Amazon: Order #114-0288455-9021845	\$30.05	Wooden Stakes	2-4-24	REIMBURSED
16	Amazon: Order #114-0350002-0782652	\$72.11	Plates, Cups, Props	2-4-24	REIMBURSED
17	B&H Video Order #1103806568	\$59.43	RGBWW Bulb Light	2-6-24	REIMBURSED
18	Amazon: Order #114-2289226-4213807	\$73.55	Fog Spray, Plastic Gallon Jar	2-9-24	REIMBURSED

Storyboards and Animatic

The goal of storyboarding is to explore the visual storytelling of the film. It is essentially a simple “comic book” version of the film where you play around with different camera angles and actor positions. You can then combine all this into an animatic, which is a rough edit of your film using just the storyboards. With this, you can play around with the atmosphere and pace of your film before even stepping foot on set. It’s incredibly beneficial to understand the emotion of your film before you start production.

<https://youtu.be/X6lnLNHwcME>



Production Design

One of the final aspects of pre-production is prop building and costume design. One of the most challenging aspects of this project was designing the coin canister, which I eventually decided to build myself. It utilizes a 6-gallon plastic carboy and a few hundred plastic coins to create the illusion of a giant glass canister of coins. Meanwhile, the coin shooters are simply painted disk launchers. When we finally had our cast assembled, we were able to find costumes that best fit the cast's personalities.



Production

October Filming: Proof of Concept

By late September 2023, the project had become so large that my project advisor and I were struggling to decide if the project was even achievable in a single semester. We were getting ready to film, but our budgets hadn't been greenlit yet, our locations were still being confirmed, and our crew availability was still uncertain. So, Dr. LaMendola and I came to a compromise: we would film a proof of concept for the movie. If all things went well and if our budget was completely approved, we would complete the rest of the film in the spring semester. And that's exactly what we did.

We filmed one scene of the script (Scene 12). The scene is close to the end of the story and is where we get to learn who The Coin Collector truly is. We filmed it on campus at the bus stop near Palko Hall. TCU PD helped partially block off the street. We learned a lot from this one scene. Some of the lessons I learned included the importance of rehearsing more with your actors. We only got to rehearse once with our two leads due to scheduling conflicts, but from this one scene, I knew I would want to rehearse more in the future. In contrast, we did a tremendous amount of planning for our lighting by testing out equipment at the location a few nights before. We would end up repeating this process for almost every other location in the film.



Spring Filming

By January 2024, we had our budget completely approved and our schedules confirmed for the rest of filming. However, despite our months of planning, we still had a few unexpected setbacks to overcome. The first of these was one of our lead actors having to drop out two weeks before filming due to a family emergency. Thankfully, we had enough time to send a casting call to the TCU Theater Department, and within a few days, we got one of our very own TCU students, Bradley Huffman, to fill the role. However, just a week before we were scheduled to film, one of our other lead actors unfortunately had someone pass away in their family. As such, we reached out to one of our other previous auditioners, Sumit Shah, to fill the role. On top of all this, we had to rework our equipment budgets and rental plans due to unforeseen circumstances in booking equipment at the very last minute. Despite these unexpected events, we pushed through and finally started filming in late February 2024.

We filmed over two weekends. The first weekend was focused on filming all of the scenes that took place in the diner, which is where all of our characters share their stories on *The Coin Collector*. Only a few problems presented themselves when filming, including having to avoid our reflections in the windows and learning to deal with an extremely loud ice machine in the background. Still, filming in the diner was one of the most rewarding moments of the entire project. It was the first time all of our actors got to meet in person. We had most of our rehearsals over Zoom, and even then, not everyone could meet at the same time. But for a brief moment, everyone got to interact, and the energy was truly electric.



The following weekend focused mostly on the flashbacks that occur in the film, the first of which was filmed just near TCU. It's a mysterious scene where the Coin Collector darts out from the shadows. It was here that our main Coin Collector actor got to meet his stunt double, who we used for the more physically taxing scenes.



The following day, we filmed on the soundstage in Moudy South shooting a fun action sequence where The Coin Collector saves someone's life. What's most intriguing about shooting this day was that we filmed for about 5 hours, yet the final scene is only a minute and a half. This ratio puts into perspective the sheer number of hours that go into even the briefest of scenes in a movie.



Later in the afternoon, we filmed at Trinity River, where once again, our stuntman for the Coin Collector came in to cross the slippery rocks of the river. The biggest challenge of this location was that we were filming at sunset, meaning we were constantly racing against daylight, but thanks to our assistant director, we stayed on schedule and finished right before nightfall.



On the last day of filming, we included a handful of extra shots at Trinity River and on campus, including cameos from Dr. Timmer and Richard Allen. At the end of Sunday night came one of our most unique shooting locations: The Stockyards. There is a small but important moment in the film that takes place in an alleyway, but finding an alley near TCU turned out to be challenging. Thankfully, we found the perfect business to film behind in The Stockyards here in Fort Worth, and late on the night of Sunday, February 28th, we completed the film.



Post-Production

The filmmaking process would not be complete without post-production. It is here that you begin to finally put the movie together through editing. After experimenting with a few

rough cuts with different levels of pacing, I screened a cut of the movie to my advisor and a handful of friends. After getting their feedback on the emotional arc of the film, I returned to edit the final cut of the movie. From here, I began working with Kyle Cornelison and Chase Morrison to compose an original score. While they worked on writing music, I spent a few weeks doing a final sound mix. Minimizing the volume of the ice machine in the background of the diner was one of the most difficult parts of the editing process for me, but thanks to the help of Adobe's Voice Enhancement programs, I was able to save the audio. I also spent a long time adding atmospheric noise and sound effects to make the film more immersive. After getting the music and sound effects finalized, I could focus on doing a final color grade for the film.



When all was said and done, the film was finally ready to screen publicly. We premiered it on April 30th, 2024, on TCU Campus with a very positive reception, followed by another screening at TCU SFA's Spring Premiere at The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Getting to watch a film that you have poured hours into with an audience of so many people is always an incredibly rewarding experience.



CONCLUSION

This project has been a long journey, and none of it would have been possible without the mentorship of Charles LaMendola, Richard Allen, and Chantel Carlson. Moreover, I am extremely thankful to the TCU Student Filmmakers Association for coming together to work on this film. The Honors Department was always completely supportive as well, as has every faculty person, friend, and family member who continually encouraged us throughout the project. The film is ultimately a testament to constantly moving forward, no matter the circumstances. To be a filmmaker is to be a problem solver because if you can't find solutions to problems as they arise, you will never have a finished film. *The Coin Collector* itself is a story that believes in always looking for hope and humanity in the world, which is an attitude that has been crucial in completing this film. Thanks to optimism and cooperation, we pushed through every roadblock on this project and came out with a finished film that I and everyone who was a part of it can be proud of.