4 Years Since Shillington: Claudia Costa, Freelance Graphic Designer

Stuck in a marketing job, Shillington London graduate Claudia Costa knew that she wasn’t living out her creative dreams. But after seeing a Shillington poster on the Tube, and then seeing it again and again, she knew she where her future lay. Nine months later, she graduated from Shillington as a graphic designer and hasn’t looked back since. Now, four years later, she’s freelancing—designing and illustrating for some amazing brands.

Keep reading to find out how Claudia found the part-time course, her advice for budding freelancers and loads more.

It’s been four years since you graduated! If you cast your mind back can you remember why you chose Shillington?

I chose Shillington because I kept on seeing your posters everywhere! Also, I was dating someone who’s surname was Shilling so I guess I thought it was fate?! Anyway I was bored in my job and was always jealous of the designer at work who seemed to have much more fun. I came to an open evening and I just knew it was right for me—I couldn’t wait for it to start.

You were working in marketing before the course, why did you decide to make the switch over to the design side of things?

A few reasons really! Mostly, I was looking for something more creative as I found it frustrating to come up with ideas for marketing campaigns and then not be able to execute them myself.

> *Also I craved something that would allow for more flexibility with the ability to freelance easily with a tangible skill that you're providing.*

What have you been up to over the past four years? How has your life changed after Shillington?

Before Shillington I went from working in a job I didn't enjoy, to working as a full-time designer. I honestly couldn't be happier that I made the leap! I didn't ever think that I'd

be able to be actually pursue design as a career, I just thought it would be another string to my bow in marketing. But as I grew in skills and confidence I realised it was actually possible.

Since graduating I've collaborated with other designers, built my own network of clients, worked in-house for an amazing brand…lots of different things. Sometimes it's been fun, sometimes it's been boring (it's still a job..!), something it's been scary…but the overriding feeling has been one of total relief that I'm doing something that I love and can see a future in.

You're now a fully fledged freelancer! Can you tell us about the kinds of projects you work on? We'd love to hear about a

recent project.

Yes! I've recently gone fully freelance and it's been great. A bit nerve-wracking, but great. I work on a range of projects but mostly I create brand identities for start-ups and young businesses. I love working with small brands because it means I get to do a bit of everything, from the art direction to the artworking, all of which I really enjoy.

A project that I loved working on was the rebrand for Pasta Evangelists which I worked on alongside another designer. It was really fun to see it all come together on the packaging and website and across buses and tubes in London. There's nothing better than seeing your work in the wild!

Back to Shillington, did you have a favourite brief on the course? Would you be able to tell us about your processes?

I loved the packaging brief—I've always been obsessed with packaging but never thought I'd ever actually create my own. For this brief I designed a range of refillable toothpaste packaging with a minimal look that was a departure from the clinical brands with busy designs you tend to see on shelf. I experimented with drawing simple illustrations of ingredients and then image tracing them in Illustrator, a tool that still seems like magic to me.

You studied on the part-time course in London. What made you choose part-time? Do you think the ability to work and study at the same time has helped you in your career?

I chose part-time because I needed to be able to keep my job and earn money alongside studying.

> *I also liked the idea of being able to really digest what I was learning and build on everything more gradually. Keeping my job also meant that I was given opportunities to use my fledgling design skills at work (I had a very lovely boss who was really encouraging despite some of my early designs being, frankly, terrible!).*

Thinking back to the course itself, what was your experience like? Did you face any particular challenges during it?

I absolutely loved the course and look back very fondly on that time as a really pivotal moment in my life and career.

Aside from the challenge of finding the time to really dedicate to the work outside of class, the real hurdle was getting over the self-doubt. I think I wasted a lot of time thinking I wasn’t good enough and second guessing my work. So I’d recommend trying to brush those thoughts aside, give yourself permission to experiment, and remember that most people are thinking the exact same thing!

Are you still in contact with anyone from the course? Have you worked or collaborated with any of your fellow Shillumni?

I’m in touch with a couple of friends from the course and whilst I haven’t collaborated with people from my class, I have worked with other graduates from the course on a number of different projects.

I definitely feel I can come to the Shillumni community for advice and support.

What would be your one piece of advice for Shillumni who want to get into freelancing?

I would probably suggest trying to secure some kind of steady gig to avoid the stress around where the next job/ pay check is coming from. I had a part-time job as an in-house designer which gave me a lot of stability alongside other projects. Also, try and join networks of other creatives as it’s a good way of getting new projects.

What would you say to someone who is spectical about the Shillington course?

> *If you want an intensive, fast-paced course that will set you up with everything you need to start a career in design then I would 100% go for it.*

It’s really rigorous and challenging so whilst it may seem like a short period of time, you learn an enormous amount alongside really inspiring and supportive teachers.

Anything else you would like to add?

Shillington has been the best career decision I've ever made so would 100% recommend to anyone who's thinking about it! Oh, and don't worry if you're crap at drawing.

Huge thanks to Claudia for sharing her story and work with us! Make sure to check out her website and follow her on Instagram.

Feeling inspired by Claudia's story? Learn more about Shillington's 3 month full-time and 9 month part-time courses Online or on campus in New York, London, Manchester, Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane.

https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/claudia-costa-interv

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