# From Doctorate to Designer—Rachel Lee, Shillington Brisbane Graduate



*Rachel Lee has a super interesting story. After getting a PhD in law, she followed her heart and passion for design to study 9 months part-time at Shillington in Brisbane. Now she runs her own freelance graphic design through Paper & Desk and works as a Graphic Designer at Brokat Creative.*

*Read on to hear more about her big career switch, why she loves working as a designer and advice for part-time design students!*

**Before Shillington you got a PhD in law. Tell us how you made the shift to design.**

While I was writing a PhD, I interned at a magazine to jazz up my boring writing (it's law, after all…). Later, I was offered a role as the content coordinator of the online magazine, and shortly after – when the boss found out I was doing a graphic design course – offered me the designer's seat. Here I was, taking the print design reins as an InDesign newbie 4 months into my course – GASP! Thankfully Shillington quickly got me up to speed, because I would have lacked the technical skills to do it otherwise. I've since moved on to work at a clothing company and more recently a creative studio, while doing freelance graphic design on the side.

**Why did you choose Shillington?**

It all started when I was helping some market stall vendors create some storefront signage. Since they didn't have email, they put me in touch with their son to continue contact. I added him on Facebook, and because he had liked Shillington's Facebook page, an ad came up on my feed. Curious, I clicked on it and combed through the website, where I found student work and the date of the next info session. I immediately pencilled in that date, and was sold when I saw the class setting in person and the quality of the student portfolios on display. Since I was working full-time, I really liked the fact that there were part-time evening courses, which made doing the course not just a vague dream but an actual possibility I could commit to.

> *Shillington was the best thing I could have done career-wise. It gave me the skills in practice and on paper to finally pursue a career in the creative industries after my detour*

*into law!*


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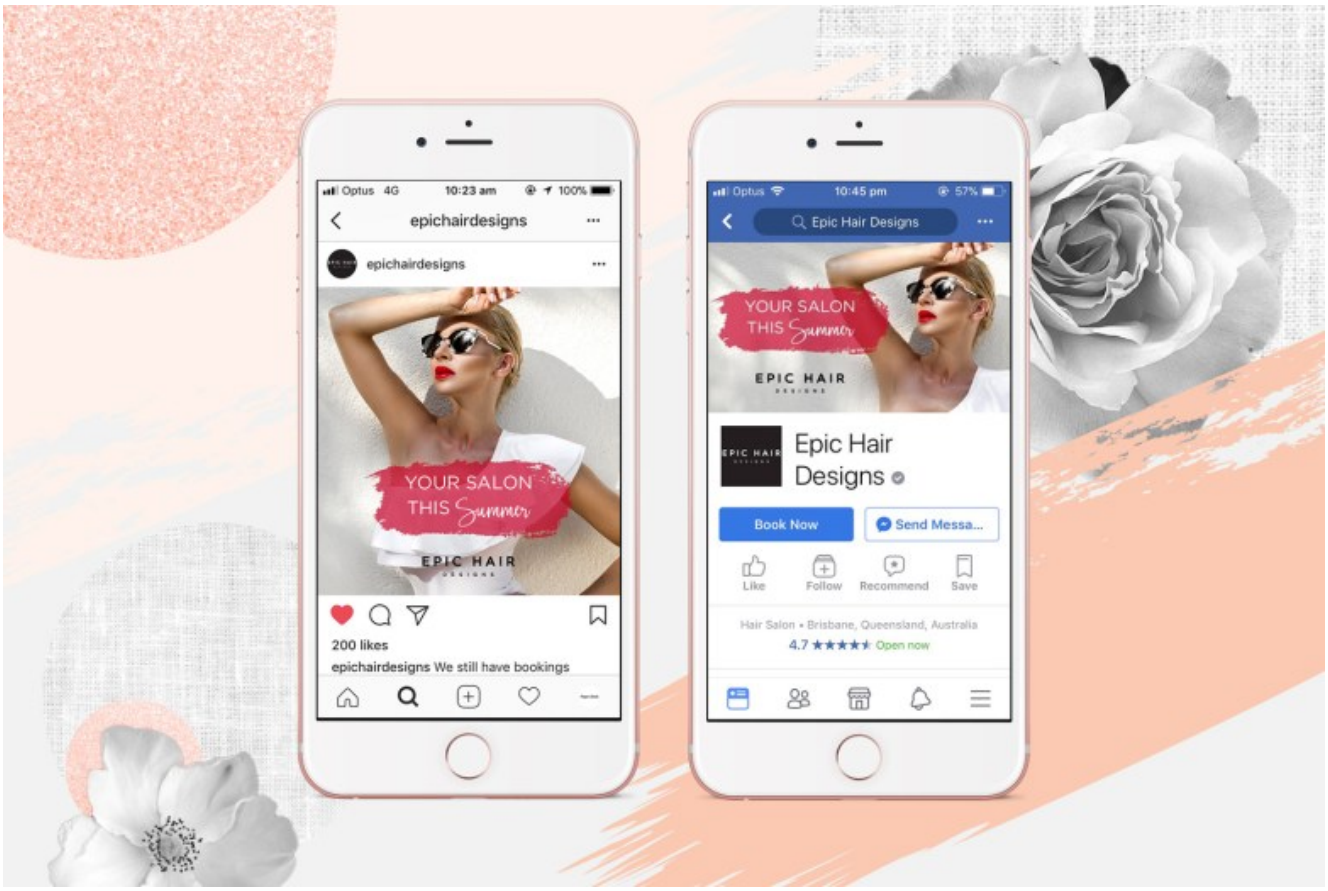
**What’s your typical day like as a deisgner?**

A typical day at the studio involves receiving briefs from account managers and then making the magic happen on the computer. It’s almost exactly like how I run my freelance design business, except I get to focus purely on design and stay away from the bookkeeping, office cleaning, stationery shopping, and client chasing side of things!

**In addition to this job, you have a thriving freelance business that’s growing every day. What are your biggest challenges, and what keeps you going?**

My biggest challenge is learning how to wear multiple hats at the same time. As a freelance designer, I’m also the bookkeeper, studio cleaner, admin lady, appointment setter, debt collector, and so on. Naturally, this balancing act comes with owning a small business. But I LOVE what I do, and knowing that every design piece I work on helps my clients to grow their own businesses, gives me immense motivation to keep doing what I’m doing.




**Why do you love working as a designer?**

*I love working as a designer because I enjoy creating things*

*with my hands and problem-solving in one hit.*

I enjoy a good design challenge and being able to offer a solution not in terms of a wordy essay, but with a graphic or a piece of artwork. Being able to design makes me happy, and something that makes me doubly happy when I know it helps someone else, whether it’s a small business owner needing product labels as an extension of their current range, or one needing a logo to get their business off the ground in the first place.

**What advice would you give to a part-time Shillington student?**

Having been a part-time Shillington student myself, I wish I did my homework more diligently! So, my advice would be to definitely do the homework, and try your best even though you’re busy. Remember that the graphic design course is fast-tracked, which means that you’ll learn something new every class, so it’s important to keep up with the homework to make sure your skills progress with the classes.


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**Where do you go for creative inspiration?**

It’s the usual suspects – Pinterest, Instagram and the search results on Google images. But I keep my eyes open when I’m commuting to work or in between client meetings in case anything pretty catches my eye.

**Anything else you’d like to share?**

For me, I found that it was important to dip my toes in first before diving straight into a particular design career. After my stint as a magazine designer, I wanted to work at a studio/agency as a designer, since I thought that was THE DREAM. But after interning at a marketing agency, I realised the timing wasn’t right just yet. As exciting as it was to work with big corporates, I discovered that my passion lay in working on smaller projects for small-to-medium-sized businesses, since I felt I was able to help those business owners more directly. After doing this for a year, I was ready for a bigger challenge – to face the giants again.

> *Design is often experimental, so I’ve learned that maybe a career in design is likewise, and possibly filled with detours!*

*Big thanks to Rachel for sharing her story! Be sure to check out her website and follow her on Instagram.*

*Want to make a big career switch like Rachel? Study design 3 months full-time or 9 months part-time at Shillington in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, New York, London or Manchester.*

https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/doctorate-designer-rachel-lee-shillington-brisbane-graduate/