

Meet 6 Shillington Half Scholarship Winners from 2020

We're so excited to have just launched our 2021 scholarship opportunities! Dive into Design Shillington Half Scholarships and a new opportunity– the Diversity in Design Full Scholarships + Industry Mentorships. Curious what it takes to win? Read on to meet 6 Winners of our 2020 scholarship, get inspired by their stories and see their winning applications.

Dyonna, Gustavo, Jia-Yi, Molly, Kaitlyn and Monica were ecstatic to win a Shillington Half Scholarship back in 2020. From a stop motion arcade game, to a digital recipe manual and

paper-crafted diorama—their applications were curious, creative and powerful. Produced in a globally eventful year, they impressed us with the way they pushed creative boundaries. They told their stories in a way that spoke clearly and passionately about why studying at Shillington would be the catalyst they needed to pivot their lives and careers.

Want to meet more past scholarship winners? Read about Darsh Seneviratne, Jordan Kenneth Kamp, Arnold Omany, Brian Gurevich, Christina Capetola and meet 6 winners from 2019.

Dyonna Potter, Shillington New York Half Scholarship Winner

- **Job prior to Shillington:** Technical Designer
- **Scholarship entry:** Powerpoint/Google Slideshow

What were you up to before Shillington and what kind of work were you doing?

Before Shillington, I was working as a Technical Designer in the fashion industry which for me, despite the title, was actually the furthest thing from an exciting and creative design career. In all actuality, I was the liaison between the actual designers and the vendors overseas. I dealt with a lot of measurements and logistics, neither of which were my forte, so the thought of doing that for the rest of my life was extremely underwhelming.

Why did you want to study design and what made you decide on Shillington?

Design was my primary language as a child, but as I became an adult, I seemed to have lost my ability to speak it fluently. After living in New York City and being surrounded by all things design, the artist in me gained a love and appreciation for graphic work. I soon began designing collateral items for my friends' start-up businesses, but I lacked confidence in my design process and hesitated taking on work because of that. Shillington had been on my wish list from the moment my interest in graphic design began to take flight.

I had been to more than a few open houses (not because I needed more convincing, but because the energy I felt there was unmatched-I felt like I belonged there). I also happened to personally know someone who attended the school, and I got to witness the massive improvement in her skillset and development processes, firsthand.

I was certain that I needed the creative boost and challenge that Shillington specializes in. I also needed the opportunity to learn professional design skills quickly and efficiently,

so that I can change career paths to one where my full potential is realized, without having to spend years re-doing my entire college education. The idea of Shillington was a no-brainer for me!

Tell us about your creative scholarship submission.

I love doing things differently from the crowd so I automatically rejected the idea of submitting a PowerPoint/Google slideshow. 'That's so generic' I thought. Of course, after a week of falling down my usual rabbit hole of intricate and time-consuming ideas, I realized I only had a weekEND left to submit...sooo I ended up submitting a slideshow-exactly what I said I wouldn't do lol! I created a digital recipe manual on 'How to Create the Finest Shillumni' (because Shillumni sounded like a unique and high-value food to me lol). I included a letter from the chef (myself) stating that I'd been working on the recipe for years but I couldn't seem to get it right. Ingredients included 1 cup of desire for a fresh start, a dash of raw talent, 100% dedication, 10 cups passion for design, 4 years earning a degree that's no longer applicable, 8 years working at a monotonous 'nine-to-five', and the 'special sauce'. The problem was, I didn't have the special sauce! I finished with a short video explaining that Shillington was the special sauce I needed to complete the recipe and take me to the next level!

How did it feel when you won?

Funny story, actually. I freaked out in every way imaginable. On one end, I was elated and at a loss for words—who knew a slideshow could win a design scholarship?! On the other end, I was STRESSED—I had actually already purchased a one-way ticket out of New York and decided to return back home to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, to ‘figure my life out.’ I had been furloughed for so long (due to Covid-19), my lease was up at the end of that month and I didn’t feel like I had anything else to stay for, as everything else was virtual. I had to decide whether to leave the scholarship behind and find peace at home OR cancel my ticket and find a place to live rent-free for the next few months, while I attended the school of my dreams. Turns out, Shillington ended up announcing the following week

that they would be creating a full-time online course for the upcoming semester so I was able to make my move and still attend my dream school, virtually! Needless to say, I experienced a rollercoaster of emotions for about a week or more after I found out I won but the way everything fell into place, I knew I was meant to be at Shillington! This was the beginning of a new chapter in life.

What would you say to someone who's thinking about studying at Shillington?

Stop overthinking and don't put a price on your future!!! Just apply and the rest will sort itself out after, IF it's meant to be! If you are ready to put your creative skills to use in a practical career, apply! You can learn ANY skill these days on YouTube but the one-on-one mentoring and critique you'll get, the classroom camaraderie, the experience of being pushed to your creative limits, etc. is priceless.

Do you think the skills you learned during the course prepared you for the design industry?

AB-SO-LUTELY! The skills I've learned prepared me for the design industry in ways I could not imagine, before Shillington. Not only did I learn necessary design skills but I gained confidence, which was HUGE. I learned how to THINK about design and now have a completely refreshed and refined way of approaching design, which makes everything a thousand times easier and less intimidating!

If you could give one piece of advice to someone starting at Shillington, what would it be?

DON'T QUIT ON YOURSELF...don't beat yourself up if you do a couple projects that suck...there's about a million briefs throughout the course (I'm not kidding lol) and your skills grow SIGNIFICANTLY, especially within the last couple weeks. There were times where I thought 'I'm not built for this.' It seriously felt like a bootcamp, but for design! Classmates

fell off along the way and you never saw them again...but I promise, it's all worth it in the end! Also, STAY ORGANIZED—that'll make you or break you in the end!

What inspires your design aesthetic?

I would say eclecticism and eccentricity definitely inspire my aesthetic. My style is not rigid at all and draws inspiration from so many different sources and mediums, which lends itself to a specific energy and a dynamic vibe. I like to think unconventionally about things and see how I can make it "different" which usually results in something a bit more quirky and creative. I love to have fun with my designs and feel free with the artistic portion of it. I 'stan' the type of design that is functional, with an emphasis on the FUN!

We're opening up our half-scholarships again this year, what advice would you say to someone working on their scholarship application?

Seriously, don't overthink it...even if all you can think of is a powerpoint slide! It's not so much about the medium as much as it is about allowing your ideas and your heart to shine through that medium! Shillington is not looking for professionals—just people with passion and dedication...Good luck!

See Dyonna's portfolio.

Gustavo Rodas, Shillington New York Half Scholarship Winner

- **Job prior to Shillington:** Architectural designer
- **Scholarship entry:** Self-Portrait

What were you up to before Shillington and what kind of work were you doing?

I went to school for Architecture and worked for 4 years at a small firm in New Orleans. I lost that job during the peak of the Covid lockdowns and thought it would be a great opportunity for a career change which I had been thinking about for a while.

Why did you want to study design and what made you decide on Shillington?

I realized over time that architecture wasn't fulfilling my

creative drive. After 5 years of design school I thought I had a lot of transferable skills to start a career in graphic design but I still lacked some of the technical knowledge and a portfolio of work to get a job. I needed a way to quickly learn those skills I was missing but didn't think online tutorials were enough either. I luckily found Shillington and thought it was the exact type of program I needed.

Tell us about your creative scholarship submission.

For my submission I wanted to learn a new skill and push myself to create an illustration which is something I hadn't really done before, I learned how to create an axonometric illustration which I thought would be a cool way to combine an architectural technical drawing style with a more fun illustration style. The composition eventually turned into a self portrait that depicted my emotional state at the time. Like a lot of people, I was filled with anxiety about my job loss, and Covid, and that definitely was reflected in the piece.

How did it feel when you won?

Amazing! It just reaffirmed that I was making the right decision in changing careers and that I had what it takes to be successful in the course.

What would you say to someone who's thinking about studying at Shillington?

Do it! If you're even considering it, it's because you're looking for a a change in your life and you value having a job and a career that fulfils you. The Shillington program is an extremely rewarding experience. Once its done, looking back at all that you learned and accomplished in only 3 months is amazing.

Do you think the skills you learned during the course prepared you for the design industry?

Absolutely! Beyond the technical skills, things that may have seemed tedious during the course like research & ideation, honing down keywords and mood boards are skills that are crucial in work environments. Shillington prepares you to handle those in tight timelines which is a totally different experience from most university programs where you might have a whole semester to work on a project.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone starting at Shillington, what would it be?

Soak in the time there, enjoy it and get to know your classmates! It is a rare opportunity to be surrounded with like minded people that are in the same boat as you. It is a great community and you'll miss the experience a lot once it is done!

What inspires your design aesthetic?

I don't really think I have a specific design aesthetic and that's something that has served me well when job searching. I believe the design approach to each brief should be unique. I had fun trying out completely different styles while working at Shillington. For inspiration, I try to think about concepts based on the research and ideation before looking at design blogs or Pinterest.

We're opening up our half-scholarships again this year, what advice would you say to someone working on their scholarship application?

Try learning a new skill, make sure you show who you are and your personality, and have fun with it!

Follow Gustavo on Instagram and see his portfolio.

Jia-Yi Liu, Shillington London Half Scholarship Winner

- **Job prior to Shillington:** Illustrator
- **Scholarship entry:** Illustrated Presentation

What were you up to before Shillington and what kind of work were you doing?

I am an Illustrator, working freelance as well as in-house. Freelance-wise I mainly do editorial illustration with an odd mix of everything from animation backgrounds to maps, which is all supported by my lovely agents over at Folio Art. On a day-to-day basis, I work as an in-house illustrator designing

assets for an educational cyber security game!

Why did you want to study design and what made you decide on Shillington?

When I was studying at university there was a sense that illustration and graphic design were two different and very separate worlds. But I don't think that's the case anymore, especially with the rise of product illustration or just the Internet really—it's no longer type and grids live here, and 'pretty' illustration lives there.

Given my role and my ability to draw, there were many things I'd get to do like sketching logos for branding, typesetting or poster layouts. They were tasks I loved but which I felt completely clueless about, and sometimes it just felt like my mouse was a bar of soap and my head was made of concrete—so I finally decided it was time to up-skill. When Shillington was recommended to me and I saw how practical the course was, it was a no-brainer for me to apply.

Tell us about your creative scholarship submission. How did it feel when you won?

I decided to use my strengths in my application to stand out. I wrote up my key points and pretended each point was an editorial illustration brief that was designed to intrigue and grab attention. The original idea was for it to be in the form of a magazine because my brain was in editorial mode. However, a friend suggested a website might be more impactful (and less early 2000s).

I found out during what I thought was an interview with Oli and Clay, that in fact I had won a scholarship. I might have screamed at them. Maybe. But it was incredible because there must've been so many talented submissions and to have won really blew my mind.

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How is the course helping you develop your skills as a designer?

In so many ways. For one, the theory, which I know you can get from YouTube these days, but having the lecturers available to ask questions and adding their own personal experience and projects really helps you grow that much more.

Another is having classmates and people to brainstorm with—the trouble with being self-taught is it feels like you're in a vacuum with your own thoughts, whereas in a class setting you have a community of people to ask for support!

What would you say to someone who's thinking about studying at Shillington?

Do it! Design has been such a mystery to me even though I worked next door to the industry as an illustrator, and Shillington has given me the tools to understand it. I would also say to be prepared to care about font serifs. Don't say graphic design isn't wild.

What are you favourite aspects of the course?

I really enjoy the guest lectures and the teachers walking us through their portfolios. It's so important to see behind the scenes and it's something that can be difficult to otherwise get access to. These insights into design decisions will be great reference points if I'm ever stuck or in a rut.

Can you walk us through the process of your favourite student brief and how you approached the brief?

My favourite briefs are those related to branding. My first branding brief was to create an identity for a new builders' directory. It was a service that connected people to quality builders or tradespeople. It can seem overwhelming to brand a business but the steps that we were given are ones I'll use for the rest of my career.

Step one: define the brief, what are the client needs, and what the problem is you're trying to solve. In my case, standing out from competitors (other builders' directories) and creating a trustworthy brand.

Step two: figure out who the target audience is. I had identified this to be young professionals of the #housegoal generation, and thinking about what their needs and goals might be.

Step three: Taking steps 1 and 2, I then developed some brand values which would help create some concepts. This is the fun part! Using brand values and the concepts as a guide to think about what the name of the brand could be, as well as the art direction—all the good stuff, logos, colour, illustration, icon styles and of course typography.

Now that you are approaching the end of the course, can you offer some tips to students on how they can succeed in the course?

When you're working—have as many (different) sketches and options as possible. I find the more you have, the better the end result as you will have more ideas to develop and critique. This is the one tip I found most difficult to stick to, but when I did manage to, the project was always more well-rounded.

Spend time reading up and doing extra research outside of class! It is a short course and any extra material you consume adds to things you can experiment with and try out while you're in class. The teachers and your classmates will always

have so many great suggestions!

We're opening up our half-scholarships again this year, what advice would you say to someone working on their scholarship application?

I feel like the winning combination might be to answer these questions – what do you feel really passionate about in the realms of design? How does studying at Shillington help you achieve that? What is your unique visual take to present that passion?

Also researching past scholarship winners could help you see what's worked and determine if your approach is original enough, but don't drive yourself mad comparing with other people's work.

Follow Jia-Yi on Instagram and see her portfolio.

**Molly Webster, Shillington
Manchester Half Scholarship Winner**

- **Job prior to Shillington:** Office Administrator
- **Scholarship entry:** Video

What were you up to before Shillington and what kind of work were you doing?

I graduated from Manchester School of Art in Graphic Design in 2019 so Shillington was definitely not out of my comfort zone. After university though, I found myself in an office admin job to get me by while I figured out what I was going to do. I felt very lost and like a small fish in a big pond. But I had multiple freelance projects to keep me in practice but still couldn't get my foot on the graphic design career ladder. Lockdown gave me a great opportunity to re-think and assess what I really want to do and how I'm going to do it. Not long

after that, Shillington came onto my horizon!

Why did you want to study design and what made you decide on Shillington?

Having already studied it, Graphic Design is certainly my passion, no question about that. I just needed something to give me back my confidence, some more guidance, and a better portfolio to get me out there—Shillington was the answer to that for me.

Scholarship or not, it's a big financial investment, so I reached out to lots of Shillumni who had a background in creative studies to gain some perspective. Along with all the great feedback, the main thing that drew me to the course was how high the standard of the work produced was just from 3 months. I was so shocked. I was also keen on how current the course was, the briefs were updated often and they offered teaching in Figma which I had seen in many job applications.

Tell us about your creative scholarship submission.

I knew I had a lot to say and a lot to explain about why I am where I am so I really liked the idea of a dialogue between me and the viewer, while I basically go through my life! To help translate that, I wanted to take shots of my daily life. 2020 was a very eventful year politically and I was very involved in it all a lot having been in London for the protests and the lockdown so it was the perfect opportunity to show graphic design in use and it's powers to create a change which really resonates with what I like most about graphic design.

[embedded content]

How did it feel when you won?

Like goosebumps! It really was the biggest boost I needed that reminded me I'm not lost, I can do this, I'm not totally stuck, there is hope, there's people out there that believe in

me. Really was the best news to receive.

What would you say to someone who's thinking about studying at Shillington?

Even if you have a slight gut feeling about it, that means you should do it. We all make a lot of mistakes in life, but this isn't one of them, and it's such an achievement once all that planning, saving and hard work is done.

Do you think the skills you learned during the course prepared you for the design industry?

ABSOLUTELY. READ THAT AGAIN. Take it from me, I did 3 years and I felt so unprepared, then I did 3 months of Shillo and interview prep couldn't be easier.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone starting at Shillington, what would it be?

You've paid for it—take in every ounce you can. Use your tutors! They are like the little angel and devil on your shoulders, their advice and experience is unmeasurable and they help you every step of the way, if I could keep them forever I would.

What inspires your design aesthetic?

It was during Shillington another student told me I have such a unique style, and I never thought I did until that second, and I put it down to the work I was producing on the course. I believe the work you produce is like a reflection of your personality, so I think my aesthetic is inspired by who I am and what I'm drawn to most. Ask yourself, what you would be if you were a typeface, a colour, a brand I think there is a collection of your answers.

We're opening up our half-scholarships again this year, what advice would you say to someone working on their scholarship

application?

Be honest, and true to yourself. You have a story to tell, but tell it through your creativity and passion. Plan it properly, and work hard on it because it'll show.

Follow Molly on Instagram and see her portfolio.

Kaitlyn Tapia, Shillington Sydney Half Scholarship Winner

- **Job prior to Shillington:** In-house Marketing & Graphic Designer for an electrical infrastructure company
- **Scholarship entry:** Paper-craft and mixed media

What were you up to before Shillington and what kind of work were you doing?

I'm currently working part-time for an electrical infrastructure company, doing their marketing and in-house graphic design—and I love it! When I took over the role five years ago it was very admin-based, but it has evolved with my own interests and self-taught abilities in design. As well as studying part-time at Shillington, I am also a mum to two beautiful little people, Brashen, who is three, and Rhiannon, who is two.

Why did you want to study design and what made you decide on Shillington?

I knew design was the work I wanted to do, but I felt limited by my lack of knowledge and technical training. I had admired Shillington for a long time; especially the work from past students—it was hard to believe I might also be able to produce work like that in just nine months. I also wanted to do face-to-face classes, and Shillington's course length and class times really worked with my commitment to my family as well.

Tell us about your creative scholarship submission. How did it feel when you won?

I've always been drawn to the unexpected and the unusual, and I wanted my submission to feel like an experience, or a narrative. I created a small box out of wood and wrapped it up like a gift. When you opened the lid, the sides would fall down to reveal a paper-cut scene of me on a nature walk with my kids. Each side of the box also had a letter in it, explaining how design and creativity play into each aspect of my life.

Earning the scholarship was so exciting! It felt phenomenal, and really justified my commitment to study, especially as it pretty much takes a whole support team (thank you

partner/parents/boss!) for me to be able to do this.

How is the course helping you develop your skills as a designer?

I love the way that Shillington teaches technical skills and design software—you learn so much so quickly, but it's so engaging and never overwhelming. The course is packed with such a variety of interesting briefs and projects where you learn even more, while getting a feel for what it's like to work for a real-life client.

I am also loving the support we get from our teachers and from one another; sharing ideas and techniques and inspo with the girls in class has helped me grow so much.

What would you say to someone who's thinking about studying at Shillington?

I'd say it's been the best decision I've ever made, and I don't want it to end. There is no way you would ever regret doing this course. No matter your motivation, there is so much that you gain and take away from this experience.

What are your favourite aspects of the course?

Looking back at the work I've done so far, I have pieces that I genuinely love and am so proud of, and I can see my own personal style slowly developing. I'm doing the part-time course, and I love having a bit of time each week to really sit with each brief, to collect my ideas and think things through. And I especially love the support from both the teachers and students—their advice and encouragement mean the world and have helped me immeasurably.

Can you walk us through the process of your favourite student brief and how you approached the brief? (Please include images of the in-progress project)

My favourite brief was to use Photoshop/collage to create a cover for a non-conformist travel magazine, featuring unconventional destinations. Photoshop was the program I knew least about, and I had never done any kind of collage before. I remember feeling completely lost at the start of the brief, sitting surrounded by cut out pieces of paper thinking, I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing. I did a bunch more research, spent time etching out lots of images (probably not necessarily, in hindsight) but it slowly started making more sense. It felt like a pretty big win, and I ended up creating what is one of my favourite pieces so far.

Now that you are approaching the end of the course, can you offer some tips to students on how they can succeed in the course?

Embrace the ideas that are really wild or way out of your comfort-zone – the teachers are so enthusiastic about making the craziest ideas come to life. Ask questions, ask to be shown techniques, and any extra time you can put in on your own time will definitely benefit you in class.

We're opening up our half-scholarships again this year, what advice would you say to someone working on their scholarship application?

Don't be put off if you feel like you have no design

experience—make something with your hands instead.

Follow Kaitlyn on Instagram.

**Monica Amir, Shillington Melbourne
Half-Scholarship Winner**

- **Job prior to Shillington:** Campaign Manager
- **Scholarship entry:** Video

What were you up to before Shillington and what kind of work were you doing?

I studied History at King's College London and shortly after graduating I became a Campaign Manager at a tech startup in London, which involved client and account management. I was still exploring what exactly I wanted to do and once I discovered where my passions lie, I moved to Australia and studied design.

Why did you want to study design and what made you decide on Shillington?

I wanted to study design because it's limitless, universal and helps others. Good design makes the world a better place and I'd been in search of doing something meaningful. With design, I can interact with people on an impactful level.

I've always been a creative at heart, but I didn't have exposure to design as a career until I entered the working world.

When I began researching how to get into graphic design, my gut feeling pointed me towards studying at Shillington. I followed up on my interest by attending an Info Session in London. This was the turning point for me in choosing Shillington. As soon as I walked in, I could visualise myself learning in a studio environment—especially after seeing the amazing graduate portfolios displayed on the computer screens.

Tell us about your creative scholarship submission.

I had the idea to communicate why I love design through 'old school' video games since going to the arcade was a big part of my childhood. I decided to create a stop motion video game which was a fun personal challenge as I've never made one before. Everything you see in the video was solely made out of card cutouts and popsicle sticks. It was a nice balance between handmade and digital, and playful and serious, which I thought was authentic to me and my personality.

[embedded content]

How did it feel when you won?

Amazing! It was a great feeling winning something that started with being a vision in my head. It definitely reassured me that I'm on the right path. I was proud of myself as all the planning, cutting, glueing, shooting and editing ended up paying off!

What would you say to someone who's thinking about studying at Shillington?

I suggest attending Shillington's Info Sessions and/or talking with Shillumni. We're a nice bunch and I'm always happy to talk if you have any questions!

Do you think the skills you learned during the course prepared you for the design industry?

Definitely!

You learn all the technical skills and key design principles, but the course also prepares you for presentations, research & ideation, file management, interviews and so much more. The course shapes you up to work as a designer in an agency or organisation from the start.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone starting at Shillington, what would it be?

Do your best and work hard on every brief from day one—you will thank yourself for it during portfolio week! Be prepared to work outside of class hours and manage your time wisely. Also, enjoy it because it'll be over before you know it and you'll begin to miss it!

What inspires your design aesthetic?

At the risk of sounding too cliché, everything around me is inspiration. Experiencing life is what inspires me the most—looking at the world with different perspectives, keeping an open mind and not being fixated on one possibility or outcome.

We're opening up our half-scholarships again this year, what advice would you say to someone working on their scholarship application?

For me, even the process of my submission solidified my choice in studying design. It reminded me why I wanted to apply in the first place. It unleashed more of my creative side, while also challenging me to think outside the box. So if you have a vision, challenge yourself and stick to it until the end.

Follow Monica on Instagram and see her portfolio.

Deadlines for our 2021 September Scholarships close 19 July, so show us your passion for design and apply now!

<https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/meet-6-shillington-half-scholarship-winners-2020/>