Meet Alessandra Conti, Shillington Graduate and Designer at RAPP

Originally from Italy, Alessandra Conti left her marketing job at an office furniture dealer to study graphic design at Shillington—to bring creativity back in to her life. Over the three months of the course, she chatted with East End locals, balanced her studies with her young family and came out with an incredible portfolio, so much so that it landed her a job at her grad show!

We chatted with Alessandra about her time at Shillington, what she’s been working on since and going “Down the Roman”. Keep reading for her fantastic story.

Why Shillington? What made our design course stand out from the rest?

My dream was to become a graphic designer and work on exciting projects for big brands. I had some gaps in my skillset I needed to fill but, without a knockout portfolio, I didn’t have any opportunity to get a foot in the door with a creative agency.

> *Shillington was the only course that could deliver that in a short amount of time. Their aim is to focus on teaching everything you need to start a career in the creative sector in a way that is efficient and industry focussed.*

You’ve just got a job at RAPP, congratulations! How did you go about finding the role?

The job at RAPP happened very fast. The Design Director saw my portfolio at the grad show, took my card and invited me in for an interview. I eventually got a job as a Junior Designer. That’s another thing that made me chose Shillington—their connections with the industry.

We know it hasn’t been long, but what have you been working on since you started?

Every day is different at RAPP. I’ve been working on some exciting projects for big clients, such as Virgin Media and PayPal. I’m also in charge of creating a visual identity for

their Flexible Working manifesto. I’m really excited about working there, it’s amazing that, even though I’ve only started as a junior, they’ve already given me a lot of responsibility.

How did you find your Shillington experience? You were also raising a young family during the course—how did you find balancing your family and your studies?

I loved studying at Shillington. There was a great energy in the class and everything was very well thought out. I think I’ve never been in a more inspiring and efficient course in my life. It was a hard choice to make though. I knew it was going to be tough, especially when you have a little one to look after. I worked very hard for 3 months. I remember that,

although I had lots of support from my partner, I never had time to even sit down on the sofa for 5 minutes. But I didn’t mind, it was actually a very exciting time of my life, I had the opportunity to get back in the game and do something more meaningful with my life.

> *Being a mum didn’t stop me, I actually think that helped me: multitasking, time management and being able to work under stress with only a few hours sleep are skills that only a parent can master!*

What was your favourite brief you worked on at Shillington? Tell us all about it!

My favourite brief was the handmade project. I loved the

opportunity to use my craft skills for one of my designs. We also had a professional photographer come in to photograph the final crafted piece and I had the chance to do some art direction. I always have lots of good feedback for this project and I think that showing an off-screen approach really makes your portfolio stand out.

You really went the extra mile for your Down the Roman campaign—we were amazed with your research. Can you tell us how you went about this?

I like to use design towards some social improvement and I've always admired projects aimed at revitalising struggling local economies. Before Shillington I self started a project that explored collaboration between industrial shoe manufacturers

and craft makers in Le Marche region of Italy. I wanted to raise awareness about disappearing local traditions in an unexpected way. When we were briefed about the campaign project at Shillington I knew that I wanted to do something similar and I immediately thought about Roman Road Market in East London. Despite the market having a very strong character, it wasn't attracting the growing middle class residents like nearby Broadway and Columbia Road markets. I wanted to find a way to communicate its authenticity and make it attractive to a new audience but without losing its original characters and existing customer base. So I had to get out of my comfort zone. I took my camera and started to take some photographs and videos of the people in the market. I talked to them, asked them questions, trying to capture their energy, their originality and their stories. They were all I needed.

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What were you up to before Shillington? Why did you take the plunge and enrol?

I was a marketing executive for an office furniture dealer. Although it offered security and flexibility, perfect for a mum, I wasn't happy and I felt that I was slowly losing my creative spark. I knew I could do better so I decided to leave and start a career as a graphic designer. It was a difficult decision but I didn't want to spend my whole life doing something that didn't fulfil me.

You previously studied interior design. Did this help during the course?

Although interior and graphic design are different disciplines, they have things in common like colour theory and design principles. I guess that some things in the course were not completely new to me and this made my life easier. But at Shillington I learned a specific creative process that really opened my mind.

> *I think that in just 3 months I achieved much more than I ever did in my BA.*

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

> *I would say to trust the process, stay positive and make decisions quickly.*

Also try to be conceptually brave and give projects a meaning otherwise you'll only end up with just a pretty portfolio to look at.

Huge thanks to Alessandra for sharing her story with us! Make sure to follow her on Instagram and keep an eye on her website for what the future brings her.

Want to study graphic design at Shillington? Learn more about our 3 month full-time and 9 month part-time course in New York, London, Manchester, Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane.

https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/alessandra-conti-interview/