

Meet Shillington Graduates Who Became Freelance Graphic Designers

Looking to become a freelance graphic designer? At Shillington, with over 25 years experience, we know a thing or two about turning people from graphic design zeroes to freelance heroes—and we thought it would be helpful to share some of their experiences and journeys with you.

So, we spoke to some of our graduates to put together this amazing guide on how some of them achieved their freelance dreams—to show you that you can do it too, with a little help from our graphic design course.

Sarah Galley, Shillington London Graduate

Sarah Galley graduated from Shillington London in 2022 and now works as a freelance brand designer.

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“Since graduating from Shillington my day-to-day life has completely changed!

I work on a freelance basis and I have my own small brand design business, where I design for independent, creative businesses. What I love most about post-Shillington life is how varied my weeks are—working on different projects and with different people every day.

I also joined a mentor group and a local entrepreneur initiative which has really helped me to feel a sense of community and connect with other creatives, which is really

important when you are a freelancer.

I work from a co-working space as all of my freelance work is remote I spend 2-3 days weekly on contracted freelance work. The balance of the week I spend working on my business, so this might be working on a logo for an independent brand, researching inspiration for creative concepts or carrying out discovery calls. I often have some sort of mentor session or workshop throughout the week which I really enjoy as it keeps me feeling part of a community.”

Read more from Sarah.

Vanessa Low, Shillington Sydney Graduate

Vanessa Low graduated from Shillington Sydney in 2019 and now freelances as Studio Van Low.

“My love of art led me to work in museums and galleries. However, whilst working at the Australian Museum, I was intrigued and inspired by the work that the designers did. I’ve always had creative ideas but not the hard skills to bring them all to life. I asked around about courses;

I wanted something more comprehensive than a short course but I definitely didn’t have the time or energy to undertake a whole new university degree. Luckily, a few friends recommended Shillington! The course gave me the theoretical background, design thinking and hard skills that I needed to become a fully-rounded designer.

In addition to learning how to use design programs, like Adobe Creative Cloud, I really appreciated learning about research,

developing ideas and communicating with others.

On my freelance days, I am usually shooting content with clients, or designing and editing from my study at home.”

Read more from Vanessa.

Caroline Adams, Shillington Online Graduate

Caroline Adams graduated from Shillington’s Online course in 2022 and freelances as Caroline Parker Creative.

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“For a few years, I was trying to learn design on my own, but I found it hard to piece together my own education using books and online tutorials and really craved connecting with other designers and students of design.

Shillington made pursuing design a realistic option for me and one that I could fulfill while still making an income. In nine months I learned more than in three years of trying to teach myself. It’s worth it one million times over.

Since Shillington, I am really proud to say that I’ve been able to launch my own freelance business and work with all sorts of wonderful clients from hotels to musicians to wellness companies.

A major shift in my life has been the ability to lead a creative life, feel like I belong in design communities, and most importantly, notice the kerning on everything.”

Read more from Caroline.

Viktoria Lange, Shillington New

York Graduate

Viktoria Lange graduated from Shillington New York in 2022 and now works as a freelance communication designer and illustrator.

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Manon Prost, Shillington London Graduate

Manon Prost graduated from Shillington London in 2020 and now runs her own design studio.

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“Before the course I was a project manager in a design studio. I’ve always wanted to be a graphic designer but I thought it was too late, I didn’t want to go back to college for 3 years. So when I heard about Shillington, it was a revelation.

No one day is the same—I always work on different projects each day to keep my creativity running. I like to keep my morning call-free since I feel like I’m more productive in the morning. Afternoon is usually for client calls, training and content creation. I try to be active on Instagram since this is where 80% of my clients have found me.

I resigned from my former full time job the day I graduated from Shillington. After an internship at Hedoine, a fashion brand, I went freelance ‘full time’ and worked on a lot of cool branding projects.”

Read more from Manon.

Jess Ibbett, Shillington Sydney Graduate

Jess Ibbett graduated from Shillington Sydney in 2019 and now works as a freelance designer, as well as running Kicks Brewing, a brewery, with her husband.

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“I’ve been quite busy since graduating from Shillington! Firstly, I worked on my graphic design business, building it up from a few freelance jobs here and there to more regular client work. Working for myself has always been the aim as it allows me to carve out the lifestyle that suits me, and my family, best.

Then, during the first wave of the pandemic, my husband and I launched our craft beer business, Kicks Brewing, which we have recently expanded, opening a new brewery in Marrickville. My husband is the head brewer and I take care of all our design needs, and together we split the operations, sales, admin etc. Another pandemic project I started with a friend is Creative Women’s Business, a community and events initiative for women working in creative industries.

Running a business can be incredibly stressful at times but aside from that, it’s been so much fun so far! I don’t personally know that much about beer or brewing, but the people in the industry have been really lovely and welcoming. I also love working alongside my husband—we make a good team. My favourite part has definitely been illustrating the can labels for each limited release. My husband comes up with some really weird and wacky beer names and using these as the starting point, without too many other creative constraints, is the best way to get my creative juices flowing.”

Read more from Jess.

Rolake Ojo, Shillington London Graduate

Rolake Ojo graduated from Shillington London in 2021 and is now a freelance designer and brand strategist and runs her own podcast, Brand New Dr.

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Wyatt Welles, Shillington New York Graduate

Wyatt Welles graduated from Shillington New York in 2018 and is now a freelance art director and designer.

How do you go about finding freelance work? Any tips for new designers looking to go freelance?

“It’s been so much fun going freelance because it allows a lot of varied work. Some favorites from this past fall include a poster and art print folio for Maurice Harris of Bloom & Plume, creative direction and layout for the magazine Bowl + Plant and artwork for the short film the Shallow End. Though they all demanded very different inspiration, going freelance and working on these projects allowed me to really explore my style and different forms of collaboration with the client.

When going freelance, I received a lot of advice along the lines of “practice patience”, “maintain personal passion projects”, and “network, network, network!”. This is 100%

true, but I also learned there's a lot in just asking!

If there's someone you want to work with or a project you want to work on: ask and always have your work ready to show.

It doesn't always work, but it's a great way to advocate for yourself and continue to put your name and ambitions out there in the world!"

Read more from Wyatt.

Ayesha Mansour, Shillington London Graduate

Ayesha Mansour graduated from Shillington London in 2019 and now freelances under the pseudonym Aah Yes Studio.

“After graduating, I set up a studio called Aah Yes.

Whilst I do the odd bit of freelance work I mainly take my own clients so I wanted a name that was personal to me but more than just my actual name. I also wanted it to be something that had a bit of personality and didn't take itself too seriously. I ended up rearranging the letters of my name to get to Aah Yes. I guess I have my parents to thank for that one!

At Shillington, as well as an understanding of processes (and the crazy amount of design lingo), I learnt a lot about managing and building relationships—something that is so important in what I do now. I also gained a lot of experience in the importance of presenting your work well, another really

useful design tool.”

Read more from Ayesha.

Robyn M-C, Shillington London Graduate

Robyn M-C graduated from Shillington London in 2017 and has been working as a freelance graphic designer for the last 6 years.

When I started at Shillington, it was all new. I’ve always drawn and painted but, despite taking art and design at school and nearly doing an industrial design degree at university, my

final degree was in physical geography. I was well versed in the science of mud but had no idea about graphics.

A few years after the course, I decided to go freelance. I just wanted to see where I could push my skills. If it feels a bit scary then that's usually my next step.

My freelance work is mainly designing and illustrating within the music, fashion and hospitality industries, but a lot with charities too. I usually do branding and logos, poster design, editorial and illustration commissions but this year I've branched into art direction as well as app and web design.

I used to work freelance as Senior Designer at Copson and designed the Vans x Copson campaign. It was an amazing project to work on and getting to delve into the Vans archive and '70s skate culture was a dream.

Read more from Robyn.

Want to become a freelance graphic designer with Shillington? Our graphic design course teaches you everything you need to know to launch your creative career—in just three months full-time or nine months part-time.

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