My Experience as a Mature Shillington Design Student

Shillington Sydney graduate Dawn Moloney is founder of A Making Life, a venture to build a community people who are constantly looking for new things to create. Read on to hear her story!

I studied at Shillington Sydney as a part time student commencing in Feb 2014. I didn’t realise at the time what a profound impact this would have on me and my life. I had expected to learn some great new skills in a fabulous environment but I had not expected it to fundamentally change

the perceptions I had of myself. Here is why…

I was a mature student at Shillington—very mature. I was a moderately successfully business woman and had worked mainly in the pharmaceutical industry almost all my working life. So, why would I change and become a graphic designer? Many have asked me this question and to explain I must briefly return to my upbringing and early career. Born in the East of London in the 60s into a working-class family—life in the arts was never going to be deemed a suitable career, so I became a pharmacist the perennial "square peg in a round hole". I painted at lunchtime, sewed at the weekend and worked all the rest of the time. Don't get me wrong I had/have a great career, I have had some magnificent experiences which always made it harder to give it up and follow my dreams of being a fully-fledged "creative person".

In 2002, at the age of 40, we sold all our possessions, uprooted ourselves and our 2 young kids and moved half way around the world and started again. We have never regretted that decision but once again it meant my creative dreams were put on hold.

Whilst I always knew I wanted to design my own fabric and make my own patterns it wasn't until we had established ourselves that I could focus on gathering the skills I needed to fulfil my dreams. That's where Shillington came in, and I finally enrolled.

I knew Shillington would be challenging, at the time I barely knew how to turn on a MAC!! But even I was surprised at the depth of my nerves that very first day.

> *It took every ounce of courage to walk through the door into what I assumed would be a group of individuals far younger than me, all of which I assume would be techno savvy creative geniuses.*

I haven’t ever admitted the fact that I threw up in the toilet 10 minutes before that very first class. Yes, a confident business woman in her 50s who had presented 1000s of times to 100s of people was a total nervous wreck on the first day of design college. Fortunately I used my experience to cover my nerves.

Looking back, I think I was so nervous because I had waited so long for this and I had finally arrived and I wanted to be good.

The year at Shillington was fun but hard and very challenging, constantly changing and evolving briefs and all the new things to learn pushed me hard to keep up. I was surrounded by supportive students and fantastic teachers, which helped keep me going.

Yes, I cannot lie I nearly quit at my first review—I nearly choked!! I found it hard not being good at something. I found it hard remembering everything, at times the programmes defeated me but when push came to shove I knew quitting was never something I could do and my teachers Clare and Louise were always there for me.

I had to admit to myself that whilst I had always been near the top of most of the things I had pursued that it wasn’t going to be the case this time. However, I also realised that I didn’t have to be the best and it was ok not to have the perfect portfolio I thought I would always have. I was at Shillington to be the best that I COULD BE and I knew and accepted that that was enough for me

My focus changed, I knew I didn’t want to be a graphic designer. Let’s face it, who was going to employ a 50 something junior!! I reminded myself why I was there and I focussed on gaining the skills I needed to fulfil my future business needs.

I cringed at times when I had to ask yet another question but

my teachers were patient and the students were so very gracious, patient and kind.

> *I came away with the best portfolio I could achieve with the skills I needed and totally amazed at myself at what I had accomplished. Since I graduated I have practiced every week to improve all the things I learnt. Now 3 years later I have finally opened my doors on my new creative workshop A Making Life.*

My creative business focusses on teaching others the love of making things for themselves. In the short term, we will be teaching lampshade making, sewing, block printing, lettering, watercolours & floristry with many more in the pipeline. I want to provide a space for participants to enjoy the craft of hand making with other likeminded people and help them build lifelong skills. And yes, I have designed and have had my first fabric printed. I'm even training to teach Indesign, anyone from my course reading this will probably choke with laughter at this point -yes me the person who took 6 weeks to toggle between stroke ad fill is planning to teach. Life is a constant surprise……..

Shillington helped me realise a dream and I will always be grateful for the part they took in helping my dream become a reality.

Thanks to Dawn for sharing her story! Be sure to check out A Making Life for creative ideas, inspiration and how-to guides to help you harness your own creativity.

Would you love to make a change at Shillington? Study design 3 months full-time or 9 months part-time at Shillington in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, New York, London or Manchester –> www.shillingtoneducation.com

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