My Shillington Story by Sam Feldman

I am Sam Feldman, a graphic designer at Advantages in Queens, NY. Some of my favorite things are Mah Jong, performing stand-up, and Jessica Walsh—who I got to meet, but that’s a story for a different time. Design and painting have been a part of my identity for my whole life, and unfortunately when push came to shove I chose to put it aside for what I considered “safer” choices. Shillington helped me finally confront myself, and choose to take a chance on myself and what I could do.

From geeking out in graphic design classes in high school, constantly doodling in my school books and the constant enthrallment I had with art class, it was obvious to everyone this was a part of who I was, even if I was not ready to take a chance on it.

I attended Stern College for Women, a liberal arts college for Jewish women in midtown manhattan. At 17 I was initially pretty set on pursuing graphic design, and a family friend recommended that I should have a good foundation in drawing. For better or for worse, I took that advice, knowing he had good intentions. That first semester I took beginner's drawing, not knowing it was infamous for being the hardest, meanest professor in the department. I worked hard to succeed in that class, and before I knew it I was in love with the art department. I took a variety of fine art and design classes, including a class called "creativity" where I made my memory box sculpture as I continued to develop this side of myself that just felt at peace when I was up until 2am working on a painting.

I had many internships and volunteer positions in college from non profits, arts education centers, museums and more. I left college working for a large non-profit I had volunteered a lot with, thinking that I wanted to eventually pursue an MPA degree. I told myself upon graduation that pursuing a creative career was impractical and shied away from it, even though I graduated from Stern as Art Student of the Year in 2012.

> *I felt that I had to choose a "safe" career. I had yet to learn that security is often an illusion we paint for ourselves.*

Art direction and design assets for subway campaigns

I got married at 22, and divorced a year and change later. I got to press a huge reset button on my life. There were no more excuses to not try the one thing I had always wanted to be good at. Because my fear of falling down and failing was so strong, that when it did happen and I did fall, and I was able to get up again, I knew that I will be OK no matter how many times it happened.

I decided to go back to school in 2015, specifically Shillington to pick up the graphic design skills I wanted.

> *Shillington was offering everything I wanted to learn and more, and had the flexibility to work while I studied.*

I went to the part-time program in NYC with Mike Sharp and Saxon Campbell (and other amazing teachers) leading my class. Their mentorship and learning from their example was irreplaceable, and when I was starting my career Mike made me feel like he had all the time in the world for my questions about the industry. From the small business branding brief, project handmade, and to my all-time favorite brief at Shillington, my Kardashian event campaign (yes, I chose to do the Kardashians all on my own) I was able to build myself up to be able to execute the designs I had in my head.

Thanks to my background in logistics, marketing, social media and graphic design, I have been able to combine my skills to work at boutique style advertising and marketing agencies. I had the opportunity to manage digital, outdoor and social

campaigns for a variety of clients, a majority of which have been non-profits.

Nothing is ever perfect, but I am in a place where I know that I am using my skills to be able to help people in the unique way I can. I still love working for a place that is mission driven, and I thank my non-profit background at NCSY Summer for that.

> *It wasn't easy, but it's like what they say about marriage. Each party has to give 100%, not 50%. Shillington gave me a full 100%, and I chose to do the same for myself.*

Huge thanks to Sam for sharing her Shillington story! Be sure to check out her website and follow her on Instagram.

https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/shillington-story-sam-feldman/