

Study Design Abroad: Camila Rogelis, Bogotá to Shillington London

Are you thinking of studying design abroad? Lots of our amazing graduates combine their love for design with their passion for travel by moving to a new city to be inspired by an exciting environment while studying for a new career.

To hear more about these enlightened globetrotters we caught up with Shillington London graduate Camila Rogelis who moved from her home country of Colombia to experience the wonder of

London. Camila tells us her favourite things about studying at Shillington, why living in London is so special and how entering competitions put her on the road to success by opening up relationships with UNICEF and United Nations!

You're originally from Bogotá in Colombia. What attracted you to Shillington and specifically our London campus?

I have a background in Art Direction but I always felt that I didn't have proper skills and that I was prepare for the real design world. It's really weird but I didn't have even a proper design portfolio when I finished Uni! Crazy I know... I was in London doing some short courses in English, Photography and Film and I went to an exhibition for Arts and Design Universities in the UK—I was looking for a Masters course but I couldn't find the proper one to suit me.

It sounds pretty random but I really liked a poster on the underground from Shillington, I checked on my phone to find out more on the website and I just loved it, the student work just felt more real. What came to my mind was it's like an internship in London! Like being in a real agency or studio!

I decided to go to an Info session in January and the London campus and environment just confirmed what I thought. I enrolled on the 3 month full-time course in April and it was definitely the best decision I've ever made!

How did you find studying on the course, did you feel was there a sense of community at the campus?

I did the full-time course which was super challenging from day one, it was very good structured and everything kind of flows in a natural way from the beginning. You get totally immersed; physically, mentally and emotionally in design—sounds quite crazy but to me it was one of the most intensive and cool experiences I have ever had! It's amazing how fast you start designing and that really inspires you, every day, to learn and do more work.

The environment in Shillington was super friendly, collaborative and very supportive. Students like to help each other and there is a good atmosphere to learn

together. Everyone is so welcoming!

At the beginning, I was struggling a little bit with my English skills but people were really kind to me every time, they made me feel comfortable and that's something I really appreciated from my experience there.

The teachers are amazing, they are super supportive and push you up to achieve so much in such a short period of time, there are lots of briefs and pressure but they make you feel that you can achieve them and that at the end everything will be fine even if it seems like a black hole! At Shillington, I met the best teacher ever, Andy Judd. He challenged me all the time and I'm so grateful because of that I finished the course with a kick-ass portfolio, I'm still really proud of! Muchas gracias Andy (:

Was the process of relocating to London for 3 months fairly easy? Any tips for people hoping to do the same?

I was lucky enough to have my sister living in the city, so it just felt like home. However, if you're looking to relocate for a short time there are so many options in London, nowadays Airbnb is a good option, research well before you move. I think people in London are so open to foreign people so you'll definitely find lovely and kind people, just be open, like London is.

Can you tell us some of your favourite things about living in London. Is it an inspiring city to study design in, and any recommendations for students hoping to study abroad?

I like how vibrant and dynamic London is, I love the variety of people, you can make friends from anywhere in the world—the influence of so many cultures is felt in the street and is very energetic! My recommendation to students that are going to study abroad is, GO FOR IT! It will be an amazing experience. Go out loads, go to museums, walk into the streets, go to parks, go to concerts (there are lots and lots of cool concerts in London, definitely one of the things I enjoyed the most during my stay). Try new food there are plenty options! Get immersed into the city that will help you to get inspiration. There are lots of design events, lectures, workshops and people in the field of design that you have so many options and places to get involved. London, it really has something special about it. Definitely is something else!

Something I love about London is how mixed and international it feels, it's got such an open mind that naturally it will help you being more creative, just by walking and being surrounded by the London environment will get inspired!

What have you been up to since graduating from Shillington? Do you think the skills you learned during the course have prepared you for the design industry and do you see graphic design as a globally applicable skill?

Since I graduated from Shillington I've been designing nonstop! I moved back to Colombia and was very lucky to enter to an agency pretty quickly but after two months I did feel it wasn't the right job for me so I decided to become a freelance designer and it's a mix between working hard, persistence, a lot of passion and being patient.

The skills I've learnt in Shillington really put me on a real level about how the industry works. To properly understand an agency or studio, to have a proper process to design and the

correct structure for designing and solving problems.

One of the most important things it was that I finished the course with a portfolio and a website I was very proud of and that really helped me to get my first job and clients afterwards. Even though I'm living in another country from where I studied, it seems to be pretty similar which is amazing because you can design everywhere. I think design is totally globally applicable and you can just move wherever you want and do it there!

As a freelancer, I have had the pleasure of travelling and working at the same time which is amazing! I have become one digital nomad.

You were the finalist in both the Rookies, AGDA Student Design Awards and Latin American Design Awards—what an achievement! Would you encourage other Shillington graduates to enter competitions like this?

I would totally encourage Shillington graduates to enter competitions, the more you enter the more chance you get for people to know your work, I believe it's just not about winning, it's about spreading out your work to the world and of course a bit of celebration as well (:

I think competitions were one of the principal reasons that I became a freelancer. Thanks to competitions I've found most of my clients.

When I did the Rookies, they had a category that was called People's Choice and people had to vote for you, some friends of my friends were looking for a graphic designer so because of that I got my first two proper design contracts for a Sports Management company in London and in a Beauty company in Colombia. Then I did the Adobe Design Achievement Awards and for entering it you had to open a portfolio on Behance which I hadn't done before, 4 months later I received an email from an agency that they saw my Portfolio in that competition and thanks to that now I'm currently working for UNICEF and United Nations! So, without hesitating do it! Try it over and over again one day you will definitely win the whole package!

From your experience, what would you say to others thinking about studying abroad?

Move to that place! You will definitely enjoy it so much, you will learn skills and open your mind to an incredible way, experience the process, make friends. I've made lovely friends during my time at Shillington, one of them got married two months ago so it was the perfect excuse for a catch-up in London. Absorb as much as you can, you wouldn't regret it—believe me if I could retake the course again I will definitely say yes!

Any words of wisdom for students about to start their Shillington experience?

Get ready for an intensive experience, but enjoyable at the same time! Be like a sponge, always ask questions and use the creative process like your new mantra, it will save you lots of time and will make your design process more fluent. Shillington is the perfect place to try new things, get dirty, try lots of handmade and artistic stuff, combine different possibilities to approach something.

Do more than one option and don't get too overwhelmed when a design it's "not successful", you're learning and real industry is like that as well. Be ready for hard work and late nights, discipline it's really important throughout the

process.

Don't forget about being positive and helpful with other classmates, that will help you grow as a designer as well, design world is about that and it will sound cliché but trust yourself, designing is maybe 50% percent about trusting yourself, trusting that what you're doing is a kick ass design and you can improve it as much as you want. Embrace as much as you can the experience, time flies!

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

Have you read any of our other study abroad series? We've spoken with Nick Jacobs who moved from Portland to London, Chrystal Christie who traded Sydney for New York and more!

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