Study Design Abroad: Dee Liang, Denver to Shillington Melbourne

Dee Liang, a design lover with a major case of the travel blog, decided to kill two birds with one stone by moving from her hometown of Denver, Colorado to Melbourne, Australia to study at Shillington. She literally followed her dreams around the world!

Read on to hear more about what visa let her study abroad in Australia, dancing professionally for Melbourne's basketball

team, her favourite Shillington brief and number one tip for people considering an international move.

You're originally from Denver, Colorado. What were you up to before Shillington?

I was working in marketing, enjoying Colorado mountains, and doing some freelance social media! On my off time, I was dancing and working on a travel blog with a friend. Hashtags and writing were my jam…until I found myself curious about the visual aspect of things, distracted by color usage, and enamored with cute menus at cute cafes. I had to do something about it! Spoiler alert: case of the travel bug and gravitation toward design eventually won.

How did you discover Shillington? Why did you decide to study in Melbourne?

I knew I wanted to look into post-grad options with design, and started looking in design schools internationally. I came across some portfolios and was so intrigued and impressed. I'd compared the curriculum to surrounding design institutions and found Shillington to be the ideal as a three-month intensive. With three campuses in Australia, and when it came down to Brisbane, Sydney, or Melbourne, I knew I had to check out the most liveable city in the world. And the one with an amazing coffee scene—Melbourne it was!

What visa allowed you to study abroad in Australia?

The Work and Holiday Visa (subclass 462) was perfect, which allowed a full year in Australia to travel around and work!

What were your favourite things about living and studying in Australia? Any recommendations for students hoping to study abroad?

> *Studying abroad brings a learning curve that's not found in textbooks or lectures. It's one of a kind.*

I was able to challenge myself and bring a whole new perspective to design. Australia was amazing and now I have international friends, and it's a great experience to immerse

myself in the Aussie culture. I'd mastered the trains and trams, I knew the brunch hotspots and secret gems, I got to intern at a fun creative agency and learn from a rad group of people, I ordered all the flat whites, you know? I felt like living with an open mind helped with being a creative. It pushes the boundaries a bit and being surrounded by a new environment and way of living is inspiring! I'd get a lot of ideas just from walking around the city.

And my recommendation for potential study abroad students: DO IT! It's one of the best gifts to give yourself and looking back, it'll always be one of the most special times in your life, I promise!

We love that while studying, you danced part-time for Melbourne United. Tell us more about that, and how dance plays a role in your creative life.

I'd been dancing on a team for the past ten years, and knew in my heart I wasn't done when I moved! I'd reach out to the coach before moving, and got to join in on a practice and audition. These ladies eventually became my first sisterhood, and my coach is phenomenal. I think dancing and design go hand in hand, and I'm lucky to call both my passions. I think aspects like attention to detail and visual storytelling are massive parallels between dance and design. I feel like dance is essentially kinetic design; every move and piece of choreography adds to a full visual, it evokes meaning, and it's visual communication. Above all, it's so fun, creative,

and expressive.

Since graduation you've moved back to Denver. Tell us about your design job, freelancing, dancing!

Yes, I've moved back home and so happy to bring what I've learned to my favorite place. I'm working with Society Melbourne in Australia (such a young and ambitious crew!), and co-founding a business with four other women, working as the branding gal! I'm dancing for my dream team at the moment, and truly feel like I'm living out my passions!

You're on the board of The Design Kids in Denver. Tell us about getting involved with that—why is that community important to you? How does it support the Denver creative scene?

The Melbourne chapter of The Design Kids was introduced to me via Shillington, and it's a massive community of creatives, design students, and design alumni. It's a helpful resource to ask questions, share inspiration, get insight to companies, and Getting involved, connecting with fellow creatives, and being in a hub of resources is a fantastic way to be at the pulse of the industry and get to know some rad people!

> *The Design Kids is such a cool community to be a part of. I knew I needed a design family back in Denver, and it becomes paramount to know the designers around you and build up the creative scene.*

We just had a fantastic event with a hand letterer I've looked up to for a while, and if anything, being involved in something like this is inspiring and gets me nerding out about design like no other!

What's your favourite project from your Shillington portfolio?

I had a blast with "Petopia"; our brief was to revamp the visual identity of a start up concept, the subject to be drawn

from a hat that was passed around the classroom. My prompt was a petsitting business, and I decided to go with the idea of pets on vacation as the main vibe. This led to exploring fun and bright colors, and imagining a world where our pets ruled (how awesome would that be?). It was my intro to the world of branding, and I loved pairing some fun copywriting with this one!

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

Be ready for one of the best and most intense experiences of your life! Always always always ask questions! Sometimes learning a new program or getting a tough brief is intimidating and challenging, but the atmosphere of the

classroom is just like a studio – ideas flow and everyone around you is so encouraging. Hang in there when it’s overwhelming, trust yourself, and trust the creative process. Most of all, embrace and enjoy the experience. Three months fly by!

Anything else you’d like to share?

I’m planning to launch a stationery and greeting card line, so keep eyes out and support a sister!

Huge thanks to Dee 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!

Want to study graphic design abroad? Study at Shillington in New York, London, Manchester, Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane –> shillingtoneducation.com

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