

Study Design Abroad: Lenny Kai Yang, Toronto to Shillington Brisbane

Lenny Kai Yang already had an undergraduate design degree, but found himself working in retail for the four years after graduation. Ready to make a big change, he moved from Toronto all the way to Brisbane to study graphic design abroad for 3 months at Shillington. Armed with his jaw dropping portfolio (seriously—scroll down to see highlights!) he's ready to take on the design world—whether it's in Australia, Canada or beyond.

Read on to get Lenny's tips about studying abroad (including why he chose Brisbane over Sydney and Melbourne), hear his process behind his favourite portfolio piece and take him up on his invitation to contact him with any questions or ideas.

What were you up to before Shillington?

Prior to studying at Shillington, I spent 4 years after my undergraduate degree working in retail. I gained a lot of visual merchandising and management experience during that time— getting into a business mindset and observing consumer behaviour. I was definitely ready to get back into being creative, I needed the time in-between to realise what it was I really wanted to do!

Why did you decide to study abroad at our Brisbane campus?

It was a hard tossup between Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. I ultimately decided on Brisbane as it was most financially viable, not to mention all the beautiful beaches that are such a short drive away!

My sister ended up moving to Brisbane to start her career and she had told me about life in Brisbane and how it offered her breathing space— ultimately I thought it would do the same for me.

What visa did you study on? What was the process like?

I studied on the Working Holiday Visa (Subclass 417) which allows you to enrol in a program for up to 3 months and work up to a year—it made perfect sense for the full time course. The process was pretty instantaneous. I applied, paid, and got the visa right away!

Any tips for other Canadians thinking about studying design abroad?

If you're thinking about it, I would say just do it! It took me a long time to decide. Shillington was always a dream of mine. I remember flipping through Wallpaper magazine and saw a Shillington advertisement. Shillington's professional, straight-forward aesthetic captivated my attention, leading me to search further about the school and what they had to offer. The pace of the program definitely suits someone who is ready to start their career in graphic design. In terms of the financial side of things, I did save a whole bunch and took on a part time job during my studies.

What were the top 3 highlights of living in Brisbane?

Deciding to leave the comfort of Toronto (home) was a hard one. However I felt like I needed space to grow personally and professionally and I felt like Brisbane was the place to do it.

Some of the highlights of living in this beautiful city:

1. Brisbane is definitely a growing city. I think that it means there are so many new things to discover, especially new businesses and eateries that pop up. This really paves way for a creative industry that is booming. The branding of these establishments are so inspiring! It is an unpretentious city that is doing

what feels is right, and that is encouraging!

2. Accessibility is a huge factor in a liveable city– I'm not talking about just transit but also resources! I feel like Brisbane has many things to discover. It might not be overtly in front of you, but if you look for it its there. I enjoy spending time at the QAGOMA overlooking the river. The lighting is picturesque and also very cinematic especially at sundown. I also love the outlying suburbs of the CBD– you can get real authentic Asian food in Sunnybank and Inala, it's incredible!
3. I know I've mentioned it before but the beaches. Being able to drive away from city life in a couple of hours, just to soak up sun and run into the ocean is truly amazing. You definitely can't get that in Toronto!

What was your favourite part of the course?

My favourite part of the course was how it was set up. At the very beginning, we were told how intense it would become. I felt that the simulation of working at a studio/agency made it exciting. Every one to two days we would receive a new brief and given strict deadlines to complete the brief. I felt like the sense of urgency and constant drive of needing to produce good-work, yet stick to a clients requests helped me grow as a designer. My cohorts and teachers were inspiring, helping to motivate me to just keep creating.

You created an amazing portfolio! Could you walk us through the process behind your favourite project?

Thank you! Halfway through the course, I was not feeling very confident. I would look at the work that Shillington Alumni created and felt as if I did not have a particular aesthetic. I learnt that it comes with time and practice.

One of my favourite projects was the personal branding. I felt a significant pressure to create something with meaning. I thought of my identity and what it means to be a child of immigrant parents— something that a lot of others can relate too.

Feeling conflicted as a child and between two cross-sections,

I wanted to create something to bridge the gap of what I often felt. That was when I conceived of Kindred— an evolving restaurant catered to sharing family dishes so that the traditions and recipes aren't lost. I wanted to create a feeling of homeliness and excitement through my idea. I spent a lot of time after the project was introduced, tweaking and working on perfecting it in-between projects. My instructors Nick and Bec were large help with passing on suggestions and opinions with the word mark. When it came to portfolio week, I had seen so much inspiration that the overall design of the brand came pretty quickly and naturally to me. I was lucky to surround myself with classmates that would not tire of me asking for their opinion which also aided in shaping my project!

What designers/studios/creatives are inspiring you at the moment?

There are so many designers, studios, and creatives that are inspiring me! I'm in awe of the work that Studio Round out of Melbourne creates. Their Lido Cinemas work really stood out to me—rebirthing a theatre that is rich with history. I recently listened to The Creative Relay podcast where Michaela Webb talks about the evolution of the graphic design industry and needing to constantly reinvent itself. I am also a crazy fan of Wedge Studios (Drav Beer), Made Thought (G.F Smith & MoMA), and Rice Creative (Provisions Marou)! Alizée Freudenthal based in New York produces some beautiful work for dream clients such as The Dean Hotel and Hotel Peter & Paul.

What's on the horizon for you?

For now, I am freelancing as a graphic designer. My dream is to work at design studios across the globe—there are so many that I would love to be a part of! The idea of absorbing different cultures, languages, and ways of life seems enchanting. Also traveling, lots of traveling.

Anything else you'd like to share?

I think it's easy to feel isolated in such a saturated industry. There are tons of designers looking for work and recognition. However, joining a network and creating a sense of community is essential for growth, something that I am still learning to do! My advice for those who are thinking

about endeavours in a creative industry is: dream, but make sure to do!

Please feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn and contact me I am open to all kinds of dialogue, design related or not!

Huge thanks to Lenny for sharing his Shillington story! Be sure to check out his website and follow him on Instagram.

Would you love to study design abroad at Shillington in Australia, the United Kingdom or New York City? Check out your visa options.

<https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/study-design-abroad-lenny-kai-yang-toronto-shillington-brisbane/>