

## **MODELS OF ACHIEVEMENT**

### **EP 10 SEG 2 WILLIAM**

ANNETTE SHUN WAH: Many people are unsure of the career they wish to pursue. William's talent for design landed him a design at one of the country's leading architectural firms.

WILLIAM: My name is William and this is my story. I was born in Hong Kong and both my parents are from Hong Kong so I'm very proud to be Chinese Australian.

We actually started in Melbourne. I guess was there up until about 5 years old and then my parents decided to bring my brother and I back to Hong Kong for a year and I struggled a lot over there. It was really tough at school learning Chinese and trying to pick it all up when I had no clue and I remember doing very badly in my subjects, especially to do with the Chinese language, but I did very well in English.

So my parents fortunately decided that it was a bit too much for us having grown up here and they then decided to move back to Australia after a year and we then settled down in Brisbane.

So in high school I had such an amazing time learning so much and I guess it really opened my mind in terms of what's out there. I was quite interested in terms of my arts in primary school but then in high school I guess was able to really develop my interests in more kind of the digital area of art and how we design things.

I wanted to look at doing graphic design but I also realised I wanted to have a challenge and I knew that university would give me that challenge. I remember quite clearly in Year 12 when I was filling out my preferences and it just kind of hit me that architecture was the right thing for me to do.

So once I decided that I wanted to study architecture I was also quite keen to leave Brisbane and to go further afield and to actually start looking at interstate universities and I decided to settle down in Sydney because of the opportunities available in terms of not only education but the employment and graduate options. Arriving at university I actually didn't know anyone at all but I love a challenge and was really keen for something new, a bit different so that I can really, I guess, open my mind and be and engage in a different way.

I really loved my first year of university. It was - I guess I had no expectations because I didn't really know much about architecture. I loved it because it was actually really creative and it was very conceptual in terms of it was all about using your imagination. It was all about pushing boundaries and being able to think outside the square and so I had a lot of fun.

Then came my second year and I was beginning to really look at where my passions lie within architecture. For me being heavily involved in community activities at school I always had a passion for kind of the humanitarian side and ended up studying subjects with a professor and she ran this program that was supported by the United Nations. And this program was being able to help slum dwellers or urban settlements around the world where it's most needed within urbanised cities and to use our creativities and design skills to help them and so I was really interested in that program and ended up receiving my travelling scholarship from the faculty to then go over to South Africa for 4 weeks.

I was actually the youngest there out of the whole program so we had design students from everything from architecture students to interior design, landscape architecture students and they were all there and we were mentored by professionals and at the same time we were able to go into the townships, the slum communities and be able to really get to know the residents, the community and identify kind of areas which can be improved or changed. What was unique about the program was the ability for me to

really apply what I had learnt at university level into a real world sense.

At the end of my degree I ended up receiving a Bachelor of Design in Architecture. I understood that I had to end up doing a Masters of Architecture which is our professional degree but for me I really wanted to have, I guess, the taste of what it would be like working professionally. I wanted to work in a big practice and so I was actually really fortunate to end up getting an interview with Hassell. Hassell was on the very top of my lists of architecture practices I wanted to get into. Hassell has done a lot of projects across Sydney and also around the world. Most notably we were the architects who designed the Olympic Park train station and also the landscape architecture for Victoria Park.

Everything's on track, I presume?

MAN: Pretty much on track, yep.

WILLIAM: What's going on here?

I was really lucky to be able to be invited on really high profile projects and be part of that team. The two that come to my mind was working on the Barangaroo redevelopment and also looking at doing the urban planning and urban design master plan of the new north-west rail link.

I remember getting an email about a scholarship from the State Architects Registration Board and it was to go over to the Venice architecture biennale. This is the most prestigious architecture festival in the world. I was actually there to build a house as part of the exhibition and this was an Indian house that had really interesting techniques being used such as using rammed earth walls, using terracotta bricks and pots to really make the structure. It was incredible, once in a lifetime experience.

I wanted to really positively influence my community but be able to give something back

and so I ended up applying to design a lights installation for the Vivid Sydney Festival. Out of the blue I was able to get selected and was provided funding by the State Government to then actually put this on, to actually put on a light experience for the general public.

So I had five sculptures and I used timber pallets. There were LED lighting inside and these lighting were triggered by motion sensors on each sculpture. It was actually quite rewarding seeing adults be quite mesmerised that you could use pallets in such a different way. It really made me realise the potential of architecture and design to really impact people.

I do love the job that I have at the moment and it's interesting because when I first started working full time I was telling people how happy I was and how much I enjoyed what I did and a lot of people thought that that was really strange and I realise that a lot of people actually don't like what they do. University has really given me the confidence to be where I am at the moment and to explore more and to really embrace my passions in design and architecture.

I've had a lot of fun and I really enjoyed it. At the same time it's also important to realise that it is really hard work. It is a long journey to the point where you are designing buildings and you are helping the community.

I name is William and this is my story. I was born in Hong Kong and came to Australia at the age of 2. I went to university and graduated with a Bachelor of Design in Architecture. Supported by the United Nations I went to South Africa and helped design for the slum communities. I worked for Hassell, currently the top ranked architecture firm in Australia. University has helped me to realise my dreams of becoming an architect.

ANNETT SHUN WAH: William graduated with a Bachelor of Design in Architecture, specialising in digital architecture. To learn more about these stories and discover your own educational journey make sure you visit our website at

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