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A Dream in Full Bloom

Vivien Sin '06 springs into New York Fashion Week as assistant designer for Marc Jacobs #MJDaisyChain Tweet Shop



Vivien Sin '06 stands amid her design; exterior of the SoHo Daisy Marc Jacobs Tweet Shop.

April 7, 2014 | Melissa A. Patricio

NEW YORK, N.Y. – It was a chance discovery that led Vivien Sin '06 to pursue a degree in architecture. An artist since childhood, she had her sights set on visual arts until School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation Dean Stephen White discovered Sin's natural talent as she sat in a corner of his classroom, hoping not to be noticed.

Sin, who had only recently moved to the U.S. and spoke little English, admits she didn't understand the assignment and was terrified to be called on. It was then that White noticed her sketches.

"I was doing diagramming without knowing it," Sin says. "Steve saw it and told me I was already at a second-year level and needed to go to architecture school. It changed my life. I was just a kid trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and he took me in. If not for him, I wouldn't be an architect right now."

On White's advice, Sin spent six years at Roger Williams pursuing her Master's in Architecture before completing a Master of Landscape Architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. From there, she landed a job with internationally renowned architecture firm KPF Associates, and has spent the past five

years working on projects teams in Shanghai and New York, contributing her design expertise to some of the world's most leading edge architectural programs.

Still, a passion for art has remained in Sin's heart, so when colleague and friend Albert Cheung invited her to lend a creative female perspective to an innovative project for the designer Marc Jacobs to launch during New York Fashion Week, Sin jumped at the opportunity. The team had just three-and-a-half weeks to scout locations, curate the exhibit and execute the vision for the first-ever social media advertising pop-up, featuring the Daisy Marc Jacobs fragrance.

"We really had to understand the Marc Jacobs brand, what the client was looking for, and determine what kind of experience we wanted visitors to have," Sin says. "We settled on creating something young and fresh."

That vision included an interactive set and photo booth where visitors would become part of the advertisement – instant models, as it were – featuring a backdrop like a field with real and fake daisies for visitors to pose and play with.

"The photo booth is something that was for the girls to have their dream come true. They would be the 'Daisy' girls and become part of the advertisement," Sin explains of her vision. "The idea came from me liking to dream about things – as an artist, always wanting to play with things, wanting to touch things. It's a lot about texture and how people can think about memories; what would capture them."

It also served as the underpinning of the pop-up's mission: that there would be no exchange of money for goods. Instead, visitors could earn credits ("social currency") by taking photos and tweeting with the hashtag #MJDaisyChain; those credits could be used toward merchandise, including the signature fragrance. The concept caught on quickly over the three days, even earning a nod from The New Yorker, which described the ambiance as, "girly but slightly provocative, sort of like if Lana Del Rey covered a Katy Perry song."

The experience was something of a dream come true for Sin, too, who says she is honored to have worked with a tremendously talented team of designers and creatives – including the Lion'esque Group, LS Group and Mash+Studio – on such a public project. It also helped her reclaim an experience she had been missing since leaving Rhode Island. As a student, Sin often dedicated what little free time she had to apply her talents to service projects at her church in Pawtucket.

"Those little projects I would do on the side were fun and I missed it," she says. "So when I started this project I was just thinking, 'what could I do to help people enjoy it and have fun?'"

Her time at RWU prepared her well for professional success, Sin says, emphasizing the program's focus on collaborative design:

"I did group projects in almost every studio I took at RWU, and that was unusual and I knew that," Sin says. "The group design perspective helped because of how things work in the real world. You never do a project on your own, never design a building on your own. You bring different strengths into the

building, and that's what makes great architecture."

Sin encourages emerging designers and architects to keep this in mind as they enter the profession.

"Sometimes we are so stubborn, we only think our way is the best but it's not," she says. Her advice to students? "Don't fall in love with your own work. Step out of your comfort zone – it's where you start to learn because you have to survive. Do not be afraid to push the limits and push the boundaries. The moment they start to do that, they will feel a lot more coming out of them. It's personal development, and helps you understand who you are, what you're good at, and helps you grow in general as a person."

Mentoring young designers is the torch Sin bears as she navigates the professional world away from Roger Williams, and one she is happy to hold, she says. The positive attitude, passion and willingness to teach those eager to learn were a signature of her faculty at the School of Architecture – one that left a lasting impression.

"Now that I am a young professional, I am learning to share my experience with people and peers because, once upon a time, a group of passionate teachers shared their knowledge with me," Sin says. "I want to be able to do the same with the uprising designers."