PACIFIC
PORTRAITS

The People Behind the Scenes
at Pacific University

VOLUME THREE
The "Bee Tree", an iconic ivy-covered tree that stood on the Pacific University campus for many years, was already old and hollow when pioneer Tabitha Brown arrived in Oregon in 1846. Mrs. Brown started a home for orphans that would grow into Pacific University. According to the Forest Grove News-Times, the tree was "said to have housed a swarm of bees who furnished the little old lady with honey which she sold to buy provisions for her orphan children."
Alex Bell’s workspace is in the back corner of the Marketing and Communications office in Scott Hall. Once the door closes, you’re in a completely different setting. Little potted plants sit on every flat surface, from shelves, tables, and even room dividers. Colorful paintings hang on every wall. One in particular, of a pink man sitting happily in his green and yellow backdrop, watches the office from the back wall. The workspace itself is tidy and open, with lots of room on the center desk for large projects. It’s dark. And quiet. You might wonder if you’re in the right place.

Way in the back, three designers huddle round a computer, going over their latest project. Alex’s coworkers are Adam, a photographer, and Joyce, an assistant graphic designer, who both stand beside Alex. They’re all smiles when I enter the room. Alex’s desk is to the right, along the wall of colourful chairs and bookshelves. A large window is at the back of her workspace, behind her desk. Artificial light is less welcome. “Yeah, we like it dim. Fluorescent lights are very hard to work under.” She wears a bright shirt of abstract flowers under a black cardigan, dangling earrings made of small beads that look like blue and yellow jellyfish, and thick socks on with her comfy clogs.

“Being a graphic artist is really great because you get to be creative.” Alex has worked at Pacific for four years as a graphic designer. Her passion for design began when she was just a kid, which gave her plenty of practice on her way to becoming a professional illustrator. Her drawings and paintings are inspired by the environment, as she likes to draw botanical and abstract shapes. On her Instagram is a collection of bright designs, floral patterns and smiling faces of light primary colors. Her work reflects the day to day emotion spoken through expressionism, a subtle yet powerful perception of sweetness regarding the world around her. She’ll often find something on her walks to bring home with her to draw,
whether she’s at the Gorge, on the Rock Creek trail, or on the beach, there is stimulus all around her. Even on campus she finds things to incorporate in her art.

Once a week, Alex attends Boxer Boot Camp, which is a program to help students majoring in physical education gain personal trainer experience. The program also helps with individual wellness and fitness goals. Students and staff are paired in groups of two, and they hike the campus together. For Alex, it’s a great excuse to get out of the office, because she’s both outside and helping students.

“People is why I work at Pacific.” Alex especially likes helping students reach their full artistic potential. Helping an intern with an art show, for example, requires an understanding of the artist and what they wish to present to their audience. Constructing a visually pleasing array of artwork is nothing new to
Alex Bell | The People Behind the Scenes of Pacific University
Alex. She shares her knowledge with interns on which pieces to display and how to arrange them. Seeing the finished product of students’ hard work is definitely worth it. “It makes me so proud.”

As Alex poses for another picture, concentrated more on posture and less on emotion, Joyce comes up behind the photographer with an image of a kitten and catches her off guard. Alex giggles, “We’re a cat office for sure.” Joyce then shows Adam at his desk, and laughter fills the office. Alex has a cat of her own, a chubby tabby cat named Pretzel. Getting back on topic, she puts her red nail polished hands on her hips, “This [pose] feels very Instagram.” Alex sees herself as a composer, orchestrating color and shape to create her designs, so she prefers being behind the camera. She claims it’s far more interesting than being in front of it.

As a designer and lover of art, Alex has her own professional website, where she’s made a portfolio of her designs, illustrations, and paintings. On ABELL DESIGNS, you’ll find special event collateral for Pacific: Homecoming event schedules, School of Healthcare Administration and Leadership brochures, and Pacific University Legends invitations. Along with works for Pacific, Alex has a collection of earthy greeting cards with more examples of her illustrations and paintings—little messages like hey you, surrounded by deep green leaves and neutral blue flowers. Alex’s love for the outdoors is reflected in her art, and her dedication to students and staff is evident in the precision of her Pacific designs. A composer, illustrator, cat lover, and graphic designer, Alex Bell is a devoted staff member of the university.