
Jane and Finch community, the 20-year-old immigrant who grew up in North York, Ont., dreamed up a mobile application that enables residents to draw, write and take photographs of the neighbourhood they call home. Her app, “Layers”, was a semi-finalist at the 2012 Adobe Design Achievement Awards and it signals her desire to use design to forge a better world. One day, she can see herself teaming up with non-profit organizations like Theatre of the Oppressed. First, she hopes to intern at IDEO, a San Francisco-based design firm devoted to advancing social good. Like her father, an insurance executive who retired at 40 to paint, Arifin dares to be different – and do good. “Designers can play an important role in making complex data understandable and rendering it relevant to tackling social problems.”

Linguistic Adventures

Katy Shum ■ Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies

GPA: 9

GOOD AT EVERYTHING, curious about all, Katy Shum could have

studied international development, business or nursing, but chose linguistics at York. The middle daughter of Hong Kong immigrants, she spent her childhood occasionally translating for her Cantonese-speaking parents in Scarborough, Ont. She also speaks Mandarin, and studied French and Spanish in high school. “I didn’t want to just learn other languages,” says the 19-year-old whose latest enthusiasm is Japanese. During high school, the children’s tutor and Christian youth group leader worked at a summer camp in Arizona, where she learned Navajo greetings and encountered a culture very foreign to her own. “It was the first of my linguistic adventures,” she says. For Shum, it triggered a fascination for the nuances of language, the pitfalls of translation and how “each language opens you up to a whole new world view.” Linguistics, she discovered, would lead her there. Next year, the dragon-boat paddler hopes to afford a fourth-year exchange to Tokyo. Then what? If she doesn’t jump into speech pathology or teaching children, she might try translating the Bible for minority-language peoples, saving dying tongues and spreading literacy. “My goal is to help people communicate with each other. If you don’t understand another person’s perspective or culture, you get prejudice and discrimination.”

SUZUKI: Practise makes perfect

