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Handwriting - Signs Chanel, Dior, And Fendi As Clients



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Since young, Ruth Tan has always been very deft with her hands, and is always seen whiling her time away crafting *something*.

She was into all sorts of craft, from beading, sketching, painting and sewing; so it was a

natural progression for her to convert this passion into a business venture.

Almost a decade ago, back in 2008, Ruth started up '**The Little Happyshop**' – an online lifestyle store selling paper goods, bags and other accessories.

Three years later, she decided to make the leap to venture into the offline realm and invested in a brick-and-mortar store at the now-defunct Holland Road Shopping Mall (known by some as the Windmill building) to complement its online presence.

Despite making her presence known on both platforms, Ruth still wasn't satisfied.

She had always harboured the idea to organise her own crafting classes, and figured her shop would make the perfect space to hold it at.

Every Saturday, she would transform a little corner of her shop into a hands-on space, and about five people would attend her Crafty Workshops, learning handmade crafts such as bookbinding, embroidery, and rubber-stamping.

Despite the small number, Ruth was happy to be imparting her skills and passion for crafting to others. True to its name, it was indeed a little happy shop.

After 2 and a half years, she realised that the feedback from the sign-ups were

overwhelmingly positive and that triggered her to scout for a bigger space.

Rebranding With A Dedicated Space

This was how The Workroom came about.

Essentially, Ruth rebranded her Crafty Workshops into The Workroom – an art studio located at Bukit Timah that allows adults to delve deeper into the skills taught.

Designed to engage participants on all their creative senses, The Workroom workshops include all-year round staples such as painting for kids and conversational French and English for Business.

As head honcho of The Workroom, Ruth is an established artist and works alongside 10 specialised artists.

Currently, Ruth teaches crafts such as bookbinding, printmaking, rubber-making, sewing and calligraphy. Among these art forms, she is particularly fond of modern calligraphy as she has always been a huge fan of typography and its bold designs.



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Australia and the United States,” said Ruth.

“Calligraphy is a practical and beautiful art form. That language is used to communicate is already a wonderful thing; now with a way to present the communication in an elegant way, it translates to a very lovely albeit ephemeral experience for the recipient.”

This prompted her to learn the craft seriously and introduce it to her customer base.

She learnt the art of modern calligraphy through books , and also attended classes for

Copperplate Calligraphy taught by a published calligraphist and teacher of 30 years.

She picked up skills such as refining the strokes, varying the sizing of letterings, and painting to create borders.

“While I started with an instructor at that time, I took over the teaching when she became unavailable. Although it was not my original plan to teach because I enjoy organising and marketing events and new experiences, I fitted in easily because I had learnt calligraphy and I am also a trained English teacher,” said Ruth.

“My training helped in things like structuring the lesson, classroom management et cetera. I ended up doing it full-time because my classes kept selling out and I even taught back-to-back 3-hour workshops on Saturdays. Soon, my studio teaching branched out into commercial hires for classes and event work.”



Ruth and fellow students after a brush lettering workshop / Image Credit: @happysshop

So what's her secret that led to the high demand and constantly sold-out classes?

"Word-of-mouth has been working best for us. For the longest time, I did zero advertising but still had sold-out classes and referrals for commissioned work. I do think, however, that some advertising is now necessary to expand our student base and to put ourselves in front of new clients."

The only form of "marketing" she does is hashtagging her works (#ruthwrites) on her personal Instagram account. However, she

insists that **@happyshop** serves more as a platform for her to document her work rather than a “business account”.

But setting her account to public *does* allows her clients to easily refer to her portfolio on the mobile platform, she admits.

Working With Big-Name Clients

Over the years, The Workroom has gained widespread recognition for its artistic works, and has collaborated with big-name companies for their corporate events.



Some client works / Image Credit: The Workroom

“I did event materials such as letters, cards, envelopes, table place cards and so on. I also did a set of painting for Chanel for its Valentine’s Day postcards for its Valentine’s

Day postcards for its VIP clients, and design work for other clients like CHIJMES and Metro. I've also taught calligraphy to corporate clients including Chanel, Dior, Stabilo, KPMG, Prudential and so on."

At any one time, Ruth usually takes on 3 to 4 projects. Some clients will come to her with a small quota, while some require a quick turnaround (for eg. 40 items to be calligrapher in 2 days).

She added that a straight-forward calligraphy project is usually completed within 5 to 10 days (depending on the bulk), and wedding design services could take up to 2 months to complete.

Despite bagging a list of renowned clientele under her belt, Ruth finds that working for weddings are always the most memorable and most enjoyable.