

Featured Alumna: Alessandra REY, Class of 2013



Alessandra REY '13 likes to tell stories. So much so, she's made it her career.

At theSkimm, Alessandra—who holds dual degrees in journalism and advertising from the University of Texas—is a Branded Content Writer, which means she creates the publication's sponsored content. Lately, this includes branded videos for which she provides the script, and if the content calls for it, acts as the on-screen talent.

The project brings her full circle: though a journalist by training and trade, Alessandra's own story starts on stage. In her second year at Duchesne (she attended PreK through 12th grade), Alessandra was connected to a local community theater via a classmate's parent. Through acting, she developed a life-long passion for telling stories and sharing them with others.

By the time she reached Upper School, she was competing in TAPPS and ISAS theater, and participating in First Thursday Coffee House. "I lived in the Fine Arts Building as much as I could," she recalls. Off campus, she performed in seven theater productions at St. Thomas High School.

At the same time, her interest in narrative arts had led her to branch out to other mediums. "Duchesne gave me so many opportunities to tell stories, and I was encouraged to explore storytelling on a variety of fronts." In Middle School, she started a digital magazine documenting the campus goings-on including Congé and Field Day. The publication was circulated to her classmates via email and was one of her first real forays into what would later become her career.

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It also set her up for success as STUCO Class Historian, a position to which she was elected as a freshman and held for three years. Now operating in an official capacity, Alessandra again documented the daily lives of her classmates. She presented the story to her class at year's end. "Through this process, I learned that stories are really around us, you just have to be willing to ask (and listen)."

She also recalls being given the Wise Freedom to deliver STUCO updates in assembly in non-traditional styles. "The ability to present and announce in my own way had a huge hand in building my self-confidence. I was not afraid to ask for opportunities that weren't necessarily there."

One of those opportunities was an internship with Houstonia Magazine in the spring of her senior year at Duchesne. After a Career Day presentation on campus, Alessandra—hungry for exposure to the inner workings of a magazine—contacted Houstonia's publisher, Duchesne alumna Nicole VOGEL '87, one of the speakers. By the end of the experience, Alessandra had set her sights on magazine publishing. "Watching the photographers, designers, and writers work alongside each other to build a publication was very inspiring to me and ultimately led me to pursue a Bachelor of Journalism and B.S. in Advertising at UT."

As a global epicenter of publishing, New York City was a natural next move. In August of 2017, after completing her undergrad studies that spring, Alessandra flew to New York from Texas for what was intended as a one-week trip of interviews and general networking. Hurricane Harvey hit while Alessandra was away, and she was stuck on the East Coast. Within a month she landed at Barnes and Noble and has been in New York City ever since.

When the pandemic hit three years later, Alessandra—like many—found herself impacted professionally. But, armed with the courage and confidence of her Sacred Heart upbringing,

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she set out as a freelancer and started her own advice blog, [Okay, Spill](#), which she still runs in partnership with her mother.

By the spring of 2021, she landed a permanent role at theSkimm. She had been following the publication as a reader since its launch in 2012, and had been applying as a writer since her “NYC adventure” launched in 2017. The role of Branded Content Writer appeared tailor-made for Alessandra, combining her backgrounds in both journalism and advertising—“something that’s typically hard to find.” From a cultural standpoint, the female-founded-and-led company is a perfect fit for a Sacred Heart girl. Alessandra highlights theSkimm’s pioneer mentality in news reporting, reminiscent of the freedom she was given to explore storytelling at Duchesne, “we’re doing it our own way.”