

The Praha–New York Bridge

"I don't have any regrets that I've chosen Prague," says the petite Jiwon Shin in a winter park at Prague's Letna. She speaks in a quiet voice and appears so modest that one would hardly take her for a highly successful woman with an international career in design. In 1989 while still a student she proposed the Samsung logo. At that time, she still lived in South Korea in Seoul where she worked, among others, for the Renaissance hotel and fashion and cosmetics companies. Since 1995 she's based in New York, and since then she has managed more than 50 projects related to brands and other projects for big hotels, air companies, cosmetics, internet and other companies. Her clients include giants like Microsoft, UPS, Sony, Samsung, Nautica, Estée Lauder, US Airways, Japan Airlines. From 1991, she was picking up one prestigious award after the other in the US.

And now, for about half a year, she's been based in a street in Letna. With a huge red sketchbook press to her chest she walks the streets of Prague. "Living here is great," she says. "This city has a soul, its age, arts, culture, the respect people feel for each other, I like all this a lot."

Jiwon Shin opened a Prague branch office of the Firefly studio, so now there are Firefly New York & Prague. She will keep her NYC office and will be active on both parts of the ocean in order to create a bridge between the two places. "I am used to working on several projects at the same time," she says, "nothing will change in that. Internet and videoconferencing make it possible for us to accept and hand over work as if we were at a place where we're actually not."

She would like to find new clients here, bring the fruits of her decade of experience from NYC in all their variety, and work with young people on international projects. She sees Prague as an inspiring place. This feeling comes from the environment. "There is so much beauty everywhere. All the colours, night shapes, everything," she says. "When I walk by the river I feel like painting, I feel that being here can enrich me, make me understand life better."

On the other hand, she would like to help the creative locals who are interested in breaking onto the world scene. She gave lectures at the Biennale of graphic arts in Brno, at the US Embassy at Charles University and met design students. Now she is looking forward to getting closer to them, she's slowly getting familiar with the environment and the people. The question "What do you like doing when you're not working?" confused her. "I work all the time," she retorts. "I love this work, it's hard for me to separate it from anything else. I think of my project even while walking in the park."