

JESSICA CLAIRE MAKES A SPLASH ON THE OC WEDDING SCENE

It was not even one year ago that Jessica Claire made a bold move in her first year as a full-time wedding photographer when she decided to transfer her business to Orange County, California, from Cary, North Carolina. According to Jessica, "I figured after the first year there would never be a time in my career when it would be easier to move because as things progress and responsibilities and reputation build, it becomes much more difficult. I am so excited to be in Southern California. There are so

many photographers and clients that are looking to really push boundaries with what they are doing—an attitude that blends well with my personal style." contacted hired her as an office manager. As a result, she learned quickly how to run a photography business. In addition to having the experience of running that wedding photography studio for four years, Jessica was also able to make contacts with several photographers who became her mentors. Although Jessica left college with no formal training in photography, her experience allowed her the expertise to open her own wedding photography business almost immediately after graduating.



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Although she has been in business for a short period of time, photography has always been a part of Jessica's life. She grew up outside Princeton, New Jersey, where her father ran a photo lab for several years. At the age of 16 she moved to North Carolina, where she completed high school and then attended North Carolina State University, majoring in English. Throughout college, Jessica developed the skills that aid her tremendous success today. Waiting on tables provided her with patience and the value of good service. She also worked providing accounting services (a job she wouldn't wish on anyone), which taught her valuable phone and sales skills. During her sophomore year of college, Jessica decided to pursue a career in photography. While she was attending school full time and working a part-time job, Jessica emailed photographers in the area and offered to work for no pay on weekends.

Although she still didn't know what area of photography she was interested in, a wedding photographer she had

Currently residing in Orange County, she operates her business out of her home. Her living room serves as a gallery where she interviews prospective brides and grooms. In addition to the Orange County living area, she also has an office in Los Angeles for those clients who don't want to make the drive to Orange County.

Mixing traditional portraiture with documentary styles, Jessica photographs the moments of the day as an observer, but she will not hesitate to ask the couple to pose when she sees an interesting pattern or background. Jessica is passionate about photographing weddings and creating photos that her couples will treasure and hand down from generation to generation. "The most important thing I do as a photographer is capture emotions in a bold, creative way. I always approach a wedding as if my photos are the only memories the bride and groom will have. I think: If I were getting married, what would I want to remember about how the day felt? Then I do my best to give that to the couple."

Jessica enjoys the ability to experience these intimate moments in people's lives as a wedding photographer. She



booking onward.”

Jessica’s photography career coincided with the beginning of the digital age, and she has only used digital as a professional photographer. Jessica states, “I was lucky that I became a photographer right about the same time digital was making its entrance, so I never had to go through the difficult transition of switching over. I was also very fortunate that I grew up working on computers (specifically Mac computers) for most of my life, so that

feels it is an honor to be invited to share in these moments. Jessica says, “It takes a huge amount of trust for people to say, ‘Yes, we want you in our faces on the most important day of our lives.’”

The one thing she dislikes about wedding photography is when couples hire her for the wrong reasons or for no reason. “It is hard to make some clients happy. They are at best ambivalent and at worst completely uncommunicative about what they want. I do find as my prices go up, so does the percentage of clients that have really thought out the decision to hire me and are really excited for me to be there!” Jessica has also established herself as a well traveled wedding photographer, visiting unique locations throughout Mexico and the United States regularly. Her goal is to photograph one destination wedding each month as a way to see the world.

Jessica also feels that she has many advantages as a woman photographing weddings. “Being a woman enables me to get really close to the bride, not only in physical proximity during the getting ready time, but also emotionally, as a friend and a woman. I also like that I am a member of my target client group. I really understand my client and what she is looking for. In a way my clients are a lot like me, so I get to experience firsthand all the ups and downs that go along with the whole wedding process. I consider each client a friend, and I always treat them that way from the



aspect of the business was also easy for me to pick up. I know there will come a time when technology will change again, and I won’t be as young, and it will probably be more difficult. But I hope that I can keep up with the times and embrace new equipment as it comes out. This is the only way to keep from being buried under an avalanche too deep to dig out of. I think one of the reasons many film photographers don’t switch over to digital is that they think what they are doing works just fine. They don’t feel they can get the results they are used to from a different format. I hope I don’t become complacent with my digital equipment so that when the next wave of technology comes out I am afraid to try it out!”

Jessica uses Canon 20D cameras with a variety of L lenses, with an emphasis on fixed lenses due to their quality and sharpness. In addition to the quality and sharpness, Jessica also likes being forced to move to capture her images rather than zooming in-and-out with zoom lenses. She

describes her style of wedding photography as “bold, bright and emotional” and constantly works to evolve her style at every wedding she photographs, pushing herself to see things a bit differently each time. For example, for the cake cutting Jessica has her assistant take the traditional photos, while she experiments with various angles or

MEMBER OF THE MONTH:

Jessica Claire



different lighting techniques to capture something unique and new.

In addition to being a successful photographer, Jessica has capitalized upon her layout and design talents by establishing an album designing business. At first, she began this business as a way to supplement her income while building her wedding clientele. In a short amount of time, her popular layout style has yielded much popularity. She posted an ad on the Digital Wedding Forum (www.digitalweddingforum.com) and received several clients within a few days. Today she has several regular clients who she designs albums for. As her wedding business increases, she is designing fewer albums. Most of her energy right now is directed towards establishing herself in the extremely competitive market that is Orange County and the rest of Southern California.

Jessica believes that belonging to professional organizations such as WPPI and Digital Wedding Forum have enabled her to make contacts with vendors and photographers that have made her career take off so rapidly. She has attended the WPPI Convention for the past four years and always comes away feeling inspired to create photos that are different from those she had been previously creating. She entered the print competition for the first time this year and received four accolades.

She is also inspired to see the world differently by many other photographers including Yervant, Jerry Ghionis, Doug and Chenin Boutwell, Laura Novak and Rosalind Van Tuyl (specifically with business expertise), Becker, James and Meredith Walters and Joe Bussink. Everyday things she sees also inspire her to push boundaries and see in a way that is different than the norm. Jessica says, "Mostly, it is just about seeing contrasting patterns and colors and thinking about things I can do to show people something they have never seen before. At weddings my main goal is to look at each couple as individuals and see what it is they love about each other. If I can connect with my couples on the level where I really understand their connection to each other, I feel I can capture it both accurately and creatively."

You can see more information about Jessica and her images at www.jcsphoto.com.

Caresse Muir began her home-based business eight years ago, specializing in family, high school seniors, children's portraits and weddings. She is a PPA Certified Professional Photographer, a member of WPPI and Professional Photographers of California. She is currently the president of the Professional Photographers of San Diego County.

STUDIO OF THE MONTH:

Ann Hamilton Comes Full Circle (continued from page 1)

of town to about 10% of her weddings.

Ann's goal when photographing a wedding is to provide her clients with a personal reportage of their day. She says, "In a way, the camera has become my pen and paper as it allows me to document the events that unfold before me." She describes her style as "photojournalistic with a fine art twist."

She was a true black and white shooter for many years but recently has grown to love color. "My style has become more fluid and, I think, more stylized. Every season affords me new opportunities and new ways of shooting as I'm constantly inspired by other photographers, the fashion industry and cinematography."

Ann made the transition to digital shooting in January 2005 and currently uses the Canon EOS 1D and the 20D with an assortment



of lenses including a 14mm and 70–200mm. Bay Photo Lab in Santa Cruz, CA, prints her prints. Ann feels that becoming completely digital has added to her creativity and made her excited about photography again. She says, "I love the whole process—from shooting to production to final output. What I've learned is that digital capture is not a singular thing. It's a starting point. I love being able to transform an ordinary image into a piece of art and giving my clients something special. Digital has immense expressive capability, and I think that's what attracts so many photographers to this medium. I admit to some nostalgia for film. But really, that's about as logical as nostalgia for my mom's vintage Royal Quiet Deluxe that I learned to type on." Ann loves creating photographs and capturing the emotions of her brides and grooms on their happiest day. She senses the importance of translating these special moments into images that will be family treasures. She reflects, "When I think back to my early days as a newspaper reporter and being assigned to cover love stories of couples in the New Jersey area, I find that my career has come full circle. I'm still doing the same job. The only difference is my pen has been replaced by a camera."

Ann has been influenced by many other photographers. Walker Evans has inspired her with his "urban juxtapositions and images of city-dwellers caught in moment of private isolations." Henri Cartier-Bresson has influenced Ann with his storytelling images. "Every photographer I've encountered throughout my career has